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Occupational choice for girls: a sociological study of the
constraints on the routes taken by a small group of girls
in a college of further education.

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The idea of this study grew out of a mix of two significant strands within my own career. Firstly, an increasing academic interest in the development of theoretical perspectives within the sociology of education (as manifested particularly in the Open University Sociology of Education courses which I was teaching at that time) and a desire to confront these myself in the process of a piece of original research. And secondly, through my teaching involvement with girls in further education, and later higher education, an increasing interest in the occupational choices girls made and the ways in which these were constrained.

Whilst the experience of "doing fieldwork" proved a totally satisfying one, in terms of the responsiveness of the girls, the data gathered and the emergence of some significant sets of findings, the completion of the work was seriously threatened by increased domestic commitments; and it was in fact shelved for two years.

It was only with a return to part time adult education teaching, which coincided with, and necessitated, a much greater knowledge of "feminist" work, and of recent developments in the study of sexual divisions within sociology, that I decided to make an attempt to complete writing up the work. It seemed to me that

- a) not only was the data that I had collected exceptionally rich and full, and that I would be letting down, as well as myself, the girls and the college staff who had given up so much time to help me if I did not make use of it but that also
- b) despite my prolonged isolation from the work that was being done in this area, the study was very much within the mainstream of recent work in the sociology of women's education and employment.

For these two reasons, then, I decided that, despite the long period

since the completion of the fieldwork, the study was worth completing and indeed could make a contribution to the developing debate on sexual divisions in society.

I should like, finally, to thank all those who have contributed in some way to this work: the girls at South Trafford Technical College who so willingly agreed to be interviewed, and the members of staff at that college and of local schools and agencies who co-operated so generously; my supervisors and particularly Dr Roger Dale who provided enormous moral as well as academic support when it was most needed; Caroline Sim who had to type an almost illegible manuscript; and finally my husband and daughters without whose support and interest I would not have been able to complete the work.

Abstract

Any explanation of the routes girls take into employment or further/higher education (routes generally leading to the female sector of the labour force) must involve consideration of the constraints on any choices they make, the relationship between objective constraints and those stemming from their own aspirations, and the different forms taken by constraints according to class and ability divisions. The aim of this work is to trace the careers, in both the objective and subjective senses, of a group of girls as they make educational/occupational choices, in order to gain a greater understanding of these constraints. And it is shown that, in this case, of a group of sixteen-seventeen year olds just starting general GCE courses at a college of further education, whilst the eventual entry of all into female areas of employment can be understood as a product, primarily, of past experiences in the school and the family, the eventual entry of the majority into "dead end" female areas of employment, in contrast to those few who entered training for a "career", is best understood as the product of a process of "opting out" of education without any great increase in qualifications. And it is suggested that this is due primarily to the interaction between awareness of objective constraints and a central life interest of "glamour". It is the modification of a subjective career dominated by notions of "having a career" to one in which, in response to a realisation of how long and difficult and boring it will be to maintain this aim, some form of displacement of occupational careers takes place, which forms the centre of the analysis. And the report concludes by suggesting the relevance of the concept of a "glamorous" career to any discussion of feminine careers; and in particular to any attempt to understand the routes taken by girls for whom neither "domestic" careers nor "occupational" careers seem adequate conceptualisations.

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Chapter I. Introduction

Women make up a large proportion of the labour force - 39.4% in 1979.¹ But

"Women's employment has continued to be concentrated in a small number of industries and confined to a range of jobs which might be described as "women's work"."²

"In occupational terms women predominate in catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal services, clerical and related occupations, selling occupations and in professional and related occupations in education, welfare and health."³

That is, the distribution of women throughout the economy is noticeably uneven. The working population is sharply segregated not only vertically with women over-represented in the less skilled and lower status positions, but also horizontally, by sex, with women generally employed in, and predominating in, a small number of manufacturing industries (textiles, garment, food and light engineering); in the service sector of the occupational structure (shops, mail order, laundries, catering and hairdressing); in clerical and related occupations in industrial and business concerns and in the civil service; and in the professions of teaching, nursing and social work. (Table 1). This is the female sector of the labour force - the occupations in which the majority of women are employed and in which they predominate.

And whilst certainly any explanations of these patterns must involve consideration of a number of factors, including particularly the increased participation rates of married women, one very important aspect of occupational segregation is the way in which the routes boys and girls take towards employment become differentiated very early in their lives. From the age of sixteen (and earlier than that in the form of curriculum differentiation as will be developed below) boys and girls are taking different routes, and the routes

girls take can be seen to lead either directly, or via their post compulsory education experiences, to the female sector of the labour force. For example, of those who stay on at school, (and roughly the same proportion of boys and girls stay on to take 2 A levels) more than twice as many boys as girls take two science A levels, almost three times as many take three science subjects (Table 2). A higher proportion of boys than girls take three A levels of any kind.⁴

(And these differences in A level courses have implications not only for entry into employment but also for entry into higher education (Table 3) - the higher proportion of boys on certain degree courses, the higher proportion taking degree courses at all, and the over representation of girls, until recently, in teacher training, being related to the type of A level routes taken).⁵ In addition, of those who enter further education at sixteen, the higher proportion of women than men in F.E.⁶ does in fact conceal increasing differentiation.

A breakdown of the courses they are enrolled for shows that women are generally on lower level skills based courses, rather than careers based courses; courses sex-typed as womens courses and leading to employment in the female sector.⁷ And more boys are on courses for which they have been released by employers - day release and sandwich courses.⁸ And finally of course this reflects to a large extent - but not entirely - the type of employment entered by those who leave full time education at sixteen (Table 4). Boys are more likely to enter employment which will enable them to train for further qualifications, whilst the majority of girls who leave school at sixteen enter those types of employment outlined above as belonging predominantly to the female sector of the labour force - occupations inferior with regard to wages, training, prospects and promotion, to those entered by boys.

This, then, is the starting point for this study - the way girls, at the end of compulsory schooling, take different routes

Table 1.

Employees by selected occupations Great Britain 1977

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>% of women</u>
Catering, cleaning and other personal services	75.6
Clerical and related	73.3
Professional and related in education, welfare and health	64.8
Literary, artistic and sports	25.0
Professional and related in science, engineering, technology and similar fields	7.1
Processing, making and repairing and related, metal and electric	4.8
Construction, mining and related	0.2

Source - Dept. of Employment (1977) Part E. Table 135.

Table 2.

Percentage of boys and girls taking particular A level courses

England and Wales 1973

<u>Subject</u>	<u>% of girls</u>	<u>% of boys</u>
English Literature	53	23
French	24	8
Biology	21	16
Art	15	9
Maths	15	41
Chemistry	13	30
Physics	9	41
Economics	8	22

Source - D.E.S. Curricular Differences for Boys and Girls.

Education Survey No. 21. HMSO 1975

Table 3.

Destination of school leavers England and Wales 1975-6

	<u>% of boys with 1 or more A level</u>	<u>% of girls with 1 or more A level</u>
Degree courses	51.8	36.1
Teacher training courses	2.5	12.7

Source - D.E.S. Statistics of Education Vol. 2. School Leavers 1976
Table 12.

Table 4.

Analysis by type of employment entered and age of entry ; (figures in
thousands)

<u>Class of employment entered</u>	<u>Age at entry into employment</u>					
	<u>Boys</u>			<u>Girls</u>		
	16	17	Total	16	17	Total
Apprenticeship or learner- ship to skilled occupation (including pre-apprentice- ship training in employment)	112.3	5.9	118.2	14.5	1.0	15.5
Employment leading to recognised professional qualifications	2.4	1.1	3.5	3.0	1.2	4.2
Clerical employment	14.6	4.6	19.2	84.5	11.8	96.3
Employment with planned training apart from induction training, not covered above	43.4	3.6	47.0	38.5	2.5	41.0
Other employment	82.1	4.8	86.9	76.5	4.3	80.9
Total	254.8	20.0	274.8	217.0	20.9	237.8

Source - Dept. of Employment Gazette. Dec. 1975. Young people
entering employment in 1974.

* A further discussion of this is contained in the glossary at the end.

from boys; routes which lead to the "women's professions" - teaching, social work, nursing to some extent, via their A level courses and consequent entry into higher education or further training; or which lead directly, or indirectly via lower level skills based courses, into short term dead end * occupations - secretarial/clerical work, shop work, unskilled or semiskilled work in a small number of manufacturing industries.

This chapter will consist, first of all, of an outline of three major theoretical approaches within sociology which it seems have important contributions to make towards understanding the routes girls take towards employment and into employment - sociological theories of occupational choice stressing the significance of "constraints" on choice; theories of sex role socialization; and a political economy perspective of which the central concept is the sexual division of labour. These will form the basis for the statement of the aims of this study, and the chapter will conclude by considering how these aims might be achieved.

Occupational choice as constrained

First, then, it will be argued that any analysis of girls' educational or occupational routes must start from the position that, "whatever routes they "choose", these "choices" are constrained.

Theories of occupational choice have covered a wide range of explanations, those deriving from psychology and social psychology placing more emphasis on the choice of occupation, that choice being one nearest to one's self perception and that will best satisfy one's ambitions and aspirations, those deriving from sociology tending to be more concerned with how that choice is limited by structural factors and how ambitions and aspirations are themselves socially structured. It is that work attempting to move towards a more sociological understanding of occupational choice, then, in comparison

with the once dominant "developmental" theories, which has emphasised the role of limitations and constraints on occupational choice and placement. Keil et al ^{10.}, for example, in 1966, isolating some of the variables involved in the process of moving from school to work that may influence choice of a particular type of employment, had named as important the family (economic level, social class, sibling pressure, family tradition and degree of parental aspiration); the neighbourhood (type of residential area, residential stability); school (type, area, attitudes of teachers, school culture); peer group (age, occupation, social background); formal institutions (careers service, access to industrial visits, part time work); and general work situation (availability of employment and national economic situation). And Roberts in his critique of the developmental theories of occupational choice ^{11.}, a critique focusing particularly on constraints imposed by the structure of employment opportunities not only in imposing direct limits on choice but also in their relation to aspirations and ambitions, suggests that individuals do not typically "choose" their jobs in any meaningful sense, and that a model which envisages position in the labour market as the end product of "rational calculated, individual" choice is applicable if at all only to a small proportion of school leavers. Different groups of school leavers possess different ease of access to various types of employment depending on their educational qualifications and the local job opportunity structure. And he argues that an adequate theory of occupational choice needs to pay more attention to the various constraints imposed upon the participants. "Careers can be regarded as developing into patterns dictated by the opportunity structures to which individuals are exposed, whilst individual's ambitions in turn, can be treated as reflecting the influence of the structures through which they pass." ^{12.} Finally, Keil in 1981 bringing together a selection of research data "relevant to the understanding of the influence of social structure on the move from full time education to full time

work, and the pattern of subsequent employment" ^{13.} states that the evidence discussed indicated the existence of structural constraints on the move - constraints which have their origin in the structure of employment opportunities and specifically the characteristics of the "dual labour market" ^{14.}; in class or socio-economic position of the family and particularly the relationship between family, class and educational experience ^{15.} and the way these relate to entry into work ^{16.}; in ascribed status in terms of sex and ethnic origin ^{17.}; and in employers policies - their strategies of recruiting and maintaining the quality and quantity of their personnel ^{18.}

Knowledge of the social structure does not, however, she points out, provide sufficient explanation of individual differences; attention needs to be paid to the relationship between individual aspirations, expectations and experiences, and to the relative weight to be given to various structural determinants at various points.

"Occupational choice" then can be envisaged as constrained, limited by structural factors; and ambitions and aspirations can themselves to some degree be understood as socially structured and influenced by the opportunities available. And there is evidence of this now in a wide range of research work ^{19.} Much of this work, however, has been concerned with class differences. It is only very recently that attention has been paid to the ways in which, for girls, the transition from school to work is constrained by structural factors. And in the following sections an attempt will be made to outline some of those constraints which may be considered to have particular relevance to understanding women's pattern of employment, and specifically the process of "occupational choice" for girls entering the labour force.

It is clear, first of all, that there are very significant direct constraints on what girls can do. The structural arrangements of society are such as to make it very difficult for a girl to move

away from the female sector of the labour force. There is still not equality of access to all types of education and employment.

Differences of curriculum - the ways in which girls are channelled into different areas of the curriculum from boys - has probably received the most attention as a constraint on girls' occupational choices. A recent survey ^{20.} provides detailed information on the way in which schools have generally continued to divide the curriculum into girls' subjects, including the arts and cookery, needlework, typing and commerce, and boys' subjects - more scientific and technical involving problem solving and analysis, as well as wood work and metal work. Girls of sixteen tend to have specialised in arts subjects and, at a non academic level, have very little experience of wood work, metal work and technical drawing. The consequence is that girls simply do not have access to a large number of courses, training schemes, occupations, which demand qualifications and experience in these subjects (this will be developed further in Chapter 3) - and lack of familiarity, certainly, can be part of the explanation of why girls are not orientated towards certain areas of work. Questions of access to subjects and courses, then, is very important. And, as shown by Wolpe's ^{21.} analysis of the official ideology of educational reports, such as Norwood and Crowther, it has been taken for granted until recently that the education of boys and girls should differ, as they had different interests, aptitudes and futures. Schools' streaming and curricular policies reflected this and it is still important today in terms of differences in the facilities/resources/staffing of single sex schools, and the organisation of option courses etc. in mixed schools. (Although, of course recent findings suggest that other factors are involved in curricular routes, that, as Shaw ^{22.} has shown, "the social structures of mixed schools may drive children to make even more sex-stereotyped subject choices, precisely because of the constant

pressure of the other sex and the pressures to maintain boundaries, distinctiveness and identity".) ²³.

Curriculum differences, then, resulting in lack of access to many routes for girls, must be understood in the context of beliefs and practices central to which is the notion that girls have different futures from boys. And nowhere is this more evident than in analysis of the type of careers advice and guidance that girls receive; the way they are channelled, or filtered into those training schemes, areas of employment, considered "suitable" for them. Sociological analysis of the "mechanisms whereby schools filter their pupils into jobs" ²⁴. - with reference to girls - is still fairly limited. But examples such as those of Llewellyn ²⁵. (who cites a careers talk where those who liked people were advised to go into an office, and those who liked things to work in a factory) support Byrne's contention ²⁶. that two myths still dominate careers education for girls - that women do not work after marriage and that there are some jobs that women cannot and should not do simply because they are women; and that "careers education today is still clouded with a constricted mythology which places artificial ceilings on girls' expectations, especially holding back the average and less able."

By the time they reach school leaving age, then, girls have already been channelled towards the female sector of the labour force - there is not a "free choice" at sixteen. Their choices are constrained because they lack the qualifications and experience to gain access to many routes, and it is possible that they are being explicitly directed into fields deemed most suitable for them.

But in addition to those constraints deriving from their educational experiences, it is also necessary to consider ways in which there are further constraints on what they can do arising from the structure of employment opportunities - the market for labour -

and the selection/recruitment/training policies and practices of employers. Women are not able to enter easily even those areas of the occupational structure for which they are qualified. Reference has already been made to the way in which, in terms of the "dual labour market" thesis of Barron and Norris, women are largely located in the secondary sector. And attention has recently focused on ways in which one of the major barriers to moving out of this sector derives from "the articulation of assumptions and expectations about women's family relationships with employers perspectives on the recruitment and selection of their employees, which result in strategies for recruitment, selection, training and promotion which rest upon the conventional wisdoms that women have, or will have, two roles, domestic and occupational, and that they will give priority to the first." ²⁷. And this is compounded by the ways in which employers consider different types of work as suitable for men and women either implicitly, as shown by Keil and Newton, ²⁸. or by preclassifying jobs into male and female jobs and recruiting accordingly. Women were seen, in Ashton and Maguire's study ²⁹. of the attitudes of employers in three local labour markets, as "naturally" more able than men to cope with detailed, boring and repetitive assembly work; and assessed to be better at jobs demanding dexterity and neat work at high speed. And, they conclude, "there does not appear to be in process any appreciable broadening of scope of employment opportunities for women the pressures at work maintaining the existing pattern of opportunities appear to be strong there appears to be widespread acceptance of differentiations between men's and women's work this is partly attributable to established and traditional attitudes and perceptions adopted by employers."

So far, then, it has been suggested that any discussion of the constraints on girls' occupational choices must include at least two very significant direct ones - deriving from the nature

of their educational qualifications, and the workings of the labour market. But it will be now be suggested that it is also necessary to consider the ways in which the girls' own aspirations are significant constraints on them, and the way in which these are in themselves a product of the girls' position in the social structure. And that it is in terms of "sex role socialization" - the second of the major perspectives outlined at the start of this chapter - that this process is most clearly understood.

Sex role socialization

First, then, it is clear that many girls aspire to, and expect to enter, those areas of employment designated as women's work. That is, there has long been evidence ^{30.} that many girls do have limited educational and occupational expectations; that they plan to work in traditional women's jobs, that they expect lower pay and status than men, that they do not wish to jeopardise their femininity by over-achieving, that they do not wish to plan long term careers because of marriage and a future of economic dependence, that they do not see themselves as having the same abilities as boys, thus being unsuited to boys' work, but rather choose jobs which extend the female role. It was the ideas expressed by the Ealing school girls which lead Sue Sharpe to state "Girls are not usually frustrated mechanics, engineers, lorry drivers, electricians, pilots, journalists and doctors. Most of them have an inbuilt cataloguing system in which the reason and dogmas come under the section concerning common sense and the way of the world they lack the confidence, opportunities and the desire to challenge the strict divisions of work." ^{31.} And this pattern of low "achievement motivation", or "poverty of aspiration", dominated by notions of "femininity" is not confined to English working class school girls. It applies also, to some extent, to those who have achieved success in the educational system; girls choosing to become teachers or

social workers can be understood within the same framework ³². And, as shown in a recent report ³³. on the under-achievement of girls in the nine E.E.C. countries, it applies to other western societies. "By the time girls reach secondary school the attitudes of parents, teachers and friends have conditioned them to thinking in terms of "female" stereotypes. They reject maths, physical sciences, technical work, draughtsmanship, as masculine and although the level of achievement varied from country to country it was felt that the assumption common to all was based on the mythology that girls will marry will all give up work on marriage."

Not all girls' aspirations, of course, can be described in this way. Recent surveys ³⁴. suggest that some girls, at least, are thinking seriously about their occupational futures, are expecting to combine marriage and motherhood with a career. But for the majority, it seems - and these distinctions will be further developed below - an important constraint on the routes they are taking at sixteen is their own predispositions, expectations, aspirations and the way these differ from those of their male peers. And this is most usually accounted for in terms of sex role socialization - the processes, starting from birth and continuing right through school, whereby a girl is prepared for the kind of life she is expected to lead when adult; whereby she will typically develop the predispositions, behaviour patterns and identity which have been pinpointed as central elements of femininity.

Thus, there is evidence, first, that the family plays a key role, even during pre-school years, in preparing boys and girls for different adult roles. It has been shown ³⁵. that within the family (as well as in the early years of schooling) boys and girls behave differently, acquire different skills, and are treated by their families in sex-related ways, so that "boys and girls quickly become aware of sex role differences, and begin to accept them as normal and given so that what could be considered problematic is

rarely seen as such.³⁶ And this process of gender differentiation is reinforced by the child's later experiences in school, attention having focused recently not only on "what" girls learn but on "how" they learn - the role of the "hidden curriculum" in this process. It is "those aspects of learning in schools that are unofficial or unintentional or undeclared consequences of the way teaching and learning are organised and performed"³⁷ which play a significant part in the sex role socialization of girls. These include methods of teaching and teaching materials ; the way, for example, reading schemes reinforce traditional stereotypes of male and female behaviour³⁸, the emphasis on man's achievements in literature and history, and teachers' expectations of and interaction with pupils, expecting girls to be motivated differently and behave differently, from boys³⁹. But it has also been suggested⁴⁰ that such aspects of school life as physical segregation of boys and girls and the sex balance of the school staff, with men occupying high status positions, need also to be considered in any analysis of how school life works to reinforce those notions of female roles and femininity that have already been developed in the family. And, finally, just how complex the process of gender socialization is, is illustrated by a recent collection of papers⁴¹ analysing the problem of why girls do not study science subjects, and find careers in scientific professions, the research discussed covering the significance of type of science, the image of science and the scientist, the sex of the science teacher, the type of teaching, the type of assessment and examination, and career prospects for women scientists.

Much of the research relevant to theories of sex role socialization, then, has been concerned with the ways the family, and the school, are important in socialising girls into a gender identity, in being responsible for girls adopting definitions of

femininity which can explain the lowering of their educational aspirations, the concentrating of their ambitions on their future roles as wives and mothers. And much of the discussion has been dominated, particularly, by the way in which sexual divisions in education are now, for the first time, being perceived as a "problem"⁴², and the significance of a sex role ideology⁴³ in explaining girls' educational experiences.

It can, however, be claimed that girls do not constitute a homogeneous group - that definitions of femininity may be differently constructed by different groups of girls within the same society. And recent studies⁴⁴ demonstrating how forms of response to schooling are mediated by girls' racial and class origin suggest the need to consider more fully those cultures which pre-adolescent and adolescent girls typically adopt. Studies of youth culture have until recently largely ignored girls. And much of the work which has been done gives grounds for arguing that these cultures reflect the future roles of women in the sexual division of labour in society. "Girls' subcultures are frequently home based, reflecting both their greater involvement in carrying out domestic chores and their parents' desire to control them by keeping them at home. The cultures reflect the future roles of women in the sexual division of labour in society. Personal relationships, appearance, romance, marriage and insularity are the hall-marks of these cultures. And in school, as well as in the family, the ideological message which is passed on to the majority of girls is one which supports both the distinctive culture of their sex and the existing structure of capitalist society."⁴⁵ But the extent to which this can be applied to all girls, the extent to which different definitions of femininity, different cultures, exist, and the extent to which these imply that it is not possible to assume a necessary continuity between the socialization work of the family,

and the socialization carried out by the school, is still unclear.

So far, then, it has been shown that any discussion of the under-representation of women or girls in certain sectors of higher education, training, areas of employment - of how and why girls at sixteen make decisions which take them along different routes from boys - must involve consideration of the direct constraints on them, stemming particularly from the relationship between their educational experiences and qualifications and the occupational structure, and also those constraints which are a product of their own aspirations; discussion of the latter having focused specifically on the role of the family and educational structures in the construction of "femininity". And it is the educational experiences of girls - the way schools discriminate and differentiate amongst pupils on the basis of 'sex, the way the educational chances and experiences of girls are different from those of boys - which constitutes the central part of this analysis.

But whilst certainly it is clear that the approaches outlined so far are of great significance in working towards an understanding of the educational/occupational choices of girls, it has nevertheless been argued ^{46.} that there are limits to the usefulness of these analyses. It is claimed that they are limited in that they cannot explain why gender has taken the form it has historically; cannot explain the diversity of experience between girls of different social classes or racial groups; and assumes the generality of one social construction of gender and the successful unconflictual acquisition by each new generation of that definition of masculinity and femininity (although, in this latter case, it has already been made clear that recent work by e.g. ^{47.} McRobbie, suggests the necessity of considering ways in which constructions of femininity may be used in resisting the school.) And it is these inadequacies or limitations which, it is claimed,

can only be dealt with by placing them within the perspectives of political economy - by going beyond a purely educational analysis; and it is this which is the third and final perspective to be outlined in this section.

The Political Economy Perspective

This perspective, closely tied to the Marxist analyses of schooling developed by e.g. Bowles and Gintis^{48.}, and Althusser^{49.} (although these approaches have in themselves very little to say about women) aims to locate schooling within a wider context than the purely educational; to relate patterns of gender education to the structuring of the labour process, the use made of female labour in the economy, and to the functions of the family in a capitalist mode of production. To summarise briefly, it has been posited, by those who have developed the so-called "theories of reproduction", that a society needs, if it is to continue, to reproduce both its productive forces and its social relations of production. And attention has been directed towards the ways in which different areas of the social structure - notably the educational system - act to reproduce and affirm the existing division of labour: the role of the school in producing a work force which is appropriately diversified, skilled and holding appropriate attitudes; and the significance of education - either as a dominant I.S.A. or through a "correspondence principle" in reproducing the social relations of production. Given that these theories promote class above everything else, their relative lack of interest in women is perhaps inevitable. But their relevance is clear in that womens' labour as domestic and wage workers within certain sectors is an essential component of the productive forces of society; and the social relations of production involve not only class relations but also the sexual division of labour. And it is this which justifies, and is the basis for, attempts to apply these theories to womens' education and employment. Work within this

perspective, then, has been concerned with asking how it is that schooling - and other areas of the social structure - produce "both classed and sexed subjects who are to take their place in a social division of labour stratified by the dual yet often contradictory forces of class and gender relations" ⁵⁰; it has been concerned with problems of accounting for "the form of gender divisions, the form of its reproduction in culture and education, and the impact of this process of reproduction on mens' and womens' lives, who are already contained within class categories." ⁵¹.

Attempts, then, to explain the process of reproduction of the sexual division of labour - womens' dual location in the home, as wives, mothers and "domestic" workers, and in the waged labour process as a cheap source of unskilled, often part time workers - have been one of the most important areas being developed within this approach. Attention has been directed on the one hand towards the relationship between the school and the family, the notion of domestic ideology being widely used ⁵² to describe ways in which familial roles are reproduced through schooling, the ways in which girls come to envisage their futures in terms of the centrality of their domestic lives; and there has also been increasing attention directed towards the structure and characteristics of the labour market, which determines how labour power is bought and sold by capital, and the relationship between girls' education and the structuring of this labour process ⁵³. Central to this latter analysis, of course, has been dual market theory, (see above page 10.); the division of the labour force into two sectors, each with its own labour market with different recruitment practices, and the location of women in the secondary market, as a source of unskilled, dispensable and cheap labour.

Patterns of female employment being clearly located in the structure of the class relationships of capitalism and the process

of social reproduction of the class structure, much of the research so far has been committed to providing an account of the relationship between class and gender. It has been suggested, for example ⁵⁴, that the development of girls' schooling, and the training in domesticity that girls received, can be best understood in terms of class and gender control; that domestic definitions of femininity were a product of bourgeois family ideology - part of the transmission of bourgeois ideals of family life with wage earning husband, dependent housekeeper/wife and dependent children; and that its imposition can only be understood in terms of the task of the schools to create a female work force of domestic labourers who would view waged work as a secondary activity. The development of girls' schooling, that is, is best understood in terms not only of male hegemony but also in terms of hegemony of the bourgeoisie. And clearly any discussion of girls' education today, and its relationship to girls' employment, must involve consideration of its class specific nature - the difference, very broadly, between working class girls' schooling, orientated towards a future domestic role, and the schooling of middle class girls, influenced, to a greater degree, by notions of equality of opportunity. (Although, of course, there is recognition ⁵⁵ that whilst the entry of the former into unskilled dead end work can be partly understood in terms of a domestic orientation, employment in the waged labour process being a "stop gap" before they can become wives and mothers, the destinations of middle class girls, predominantly into "female professions", can possibly only be understood in the context of the relationship between an overt ideology of equal opportunity and a hidden curriculum perpetuating the ideology of femininity as synonymous with wife and mother.)

But whilst the importance, in any analysis, of attempting to integrate the two structures of control is recognized, of

attempting to understand girls' experiences as gender and class determined, the relationship between the two is a complex one. Analysis of this relationship it is suggested ^{56.} involves questions of the extent to which patterns of gender training and gender definitions in the family may be different from those of school, and the way in which girls cope with the contradictory messages of family and school; and in particular involves consideration of the relationship of gender struggles to forms of class struggle in schools, and the forms of resistance that may be developed to these two forms of control. And it is this latter, it seems, following closely the work of Willis ^{57.} in relation to boys, and McRobbie ^{58.}, as outlined above (p.14) which is opening up new avenues of research. What forms of resistance may be developed by girls to class and gender control? Is a girl's response to the class structure of the school mediated by her sex - a reaffirmation of gender identity, for example, providing a means of resisting the class culture of the school? To what extent is it possible to identify different or contradictory definitions of femininity which may be of importance in this process? And what is the significance of these forms of resistance and struggle for an understanding of girls' entry into employment?

Major premises and aims of the research

It is these three approaches, then, the first one setting out the basic premise that all occupational choices are constrained, the second identifying specifically personal or subjective constraints in relation to girls, and the third locating constraints on girls' choices in the structure of capitalist society, which form the basis from which the specific aims and development of this research are constituted. It is posited now that explanations of girls' educational/occupational choices - the routes they take at sixteen - can most fruitfully be developed, expanded, in terms of a framework central to which is the recognition that:-

1) all educational/occupational choices are constrained, the constraints stemming from many areas of the social structure.

2) to focus specifically on girls, a useful distinction can be made between "direct" (or objective) constraints and those (subjective ones) stemming from the girls' own aspirations - the ways in which girls' socialization, from an early age, has resulted in the development of "femininity", of girls having notions of their own abilities and future roles as being very different from those of their male peers; notions which can account to some extent for their low aspirations.

3) that the relationship between direct constraints and the girls' aspirations is not always very clear and that attention might very usefully be paid to the way, for girls, direct constraints not only limit access to many routes but also are important determinants of their "construction of reality"; that the way these direct constraints are interpreted, how they become part of a girl's definitions at the time she is making choices, is possibly as significant as those notions of femininity which have developed over a longer period - and need to be related to them.

4) that it is necessary to be aware of the significance of class - and ability - divisions between girls; that, as shown by Byrne ⁵⁹. in her discussion of the way girls who are less able, Northern, of lower social class, and rural are "quadruply disadvantaged"; and as shown by King ⁶⁰. in his discussion of the "sex gap" which differs for each social class, these distinctions are important. Analysis of official state documents ⁶¹. shows how, running through them, is an awareness of the need to differentiate between girls on the basis of class and ability; and today "middle class girls of high or average ability are now likely to encounter fewer difficulties than was formerly the case since teachers, policy makers and the community in general recognize that they will work for a large part of their lives and are likely to combine marriage

and motherhood with a career". 62.

5) and it is posited, finally, that the constraints on girls as they make educational/occupational choices, and the differences between girls in the way they are constrained need to be related to the structuring of the labour process and the family under the conditions of a capitalist mode of production; that it is the dual role of women in the labour process - as wage workers and at home - and the way in which their socialization "succeeds" to a greater or lesser degree in preparing them for this, and, specifically, the significance of class and gender struggles within schooling in the context of the process of reproduction of the sexual division of labour, which is of central importance.

The aims of this research, then, are to gain a clear understanding of the ways in which the educational/occupational choices of girls are constrained; specifically to attempt a clearer analysis of the relationship between direct constraints and aspirations; and to attempt to isolate class, and possibly ability, from the constraints related to sex. And in the final section of this chapter it will now be suggested that these aims might best be achieved by a study of the careers (in its symbolic interactionist usage) of a group of girls as they approach the end of full time education, make the transition from school to work, training or further education.

First, then it seems clear that any research on girls' educational/occupational choices is going to need to work within two very clearly distinguished theoretical and methodological approaches. On the one hand is that approach which takes as its starting point the society, social structure and social system; the location of individuals in terms of class, sex, age, in that structure, with the differential access to resources and life chances

which is basic to it. And on the other hand is that which starts from the importance of studying the individuals' subjective understanding of his world - his perceptions, meanings, understandings and interpretations; the tradition of "explaining by understanding" derived from Weber and G.H.Mead which works from the primary importance of the purposive nature of human action, the fact that people differ from natural objects in their ability to interpret their own actions, endow their lives with meaning. Each has been criticized - the social system's approach for making the social structure too determinate of action; the action approach for its failure to take into account the structures and systems that limit and constrain interpretive procedures ⁶³. And whilst most sociological research within the last few years has tended to align itself on one side or the other of the divide between the sociology of social systems and the sociology of social action ⁶⁴, there have also been suggestions that these two opposed conceptions of society are in fact reconcilable, that they simply emphasise different aspects of the same social reality ⁶⁵. In the work of Berger and Luckmann ⁶⁶, particularly, an explicit attempt has been made to give attention to the individual and the structural, the subjective and the objective, the creative and the constraining, within a single theoretical framework, in which they explain how the social world is both an objective and subjective reality to man; objective in that its institutions are there, external to him, constraining him and not diminished if the individual does not understand their mode of operation; subjectively real in that he attaches meanings to them and interprets them.

And it is this kind of formulation which provides the starting point for this work. The constraints on the girls must be understood as a product of the girls' position in the social structure - their position in a society stratified by divisions of

* A further discussion of this is contained in the glossary at the end.

class and sex. As already made clear, this is absolutely central to any understanding of the routes they are taking. But there is also a recognition of the importance of attempting to penetrate the subjective world of girls' interpretations, definitions, meanings; of attempting to discover the meanings imputed to the world by them; the importance of attempting to understand how girls are making sense of the situations in which they are finding themselves. And it will now be suggested that by working within the tradition of the action perspective - specifically of symbolic interactionism--and by using the notion of career as the basic sensitising concept, it might be possible to move slightly towards this dual aim. *

As interpreted by Blumer (1969) ⁶⁷. interactionism consists of three basic premises - human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings the things have for them; these meanings are a product of social interaction in society; and these meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process that is used by each individual in dealing with the system he or she encounters. Central to much of this work is the idea of self - a person's "self image" - a set of attitudes, beliefs and opinions held by the person about himself, that is based upon certain sets of relationships, and will change, is constantly changing, as the individual's location in society changes. Changes in identity are seen to result from changes in a person's position in society, his movement from one status to another. And it is the concept of career, it has been argued, which ties together these central notions of symbolic interactionism in a dynamic fashion.

The concept of career, of course, usually applies to the movement of an individual from one position to another in an occupational system; and career "contingencies" have been shown to include "both objective facts of social structure and changes in perspectives, motivations, and desires of the individual." ⁶⁸. But in its broader sense, as developed by sociologists of the Chicago school, it can be used to include all, or any, aspects of an individual's life; to refer to any progress through identity bestowing structural locations. And it is the following definition by Hughes ⁶⁹. which is the starting point for this work. "In a highly and rigidly structured society, a career consists, objectively, of a series of statuses and clearly defined offices. In a freer one, the individual has more latitude for creating his own position in choosing from any number of existing ones: he also, has less certainty of achieving any given position. There are more adventures and more failures; but unless complete disorder reigns, there will be typical sequences of position, achievement, responsibility, even of adventure. The social order will set limits upon the individual's orientation of life, both as to direction of effort and as to interpretation of its meaning.

Subjectively, a career is the moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and the things which happen to him. This perspective is not absolutely fixed either as to points of view, direction or destination

A study of careers - of the moving perspective in which persons orient themselves with reference to the social order and of the typical sequences and concatenations of office - may be expected to reveal the nature and 'working constitution' of a society." Whilst, that is, the concept has been most widely used in the study of occupations, its use need not be restricted in this way. An individual has many careers, in the more general sense of the word, during his/her life, many of them progressing simultaneously, and

studies of the careers of TB patients ^{70.} and marijuana users ^{71.}, and of deviant careers ^{72.}, demonstrate this wider applicability of the concept.

Furthermore, it is clear from the above definition that the use of 'career' can be extended beyond the more usual objective approach. The value of the notion lies in its two-sidedness. "One side is linked to internal matters held dearly and closely, such as image of self and felt identity; the other side concerns official position, jural relations, and style of life, and is part of a publicly accessible institutional complex." ^{73.} And it is this bringing together of the objective and the subjective, the importance of 'career' in tying together social structure and individual identity, which is central to the work of e.g. Strauss and Becker ^{74.}. Strauss shows how, for example, changes in status can result in new identities, self conceptions; how turning points occur in which the individual has to take stock - re-evaluate and rejudge; and how each individual's account of his life is a "symbolic ordering of events". And Becker, studying adult socialization, shows how individuals change in self, identity, ways of thinking, as they move through institutional settings; how social organization has an effect on the self; and how situational adjustment and career commitment are essential components of the development of careers.

It is planned, then, to work within a tradition which, whilst emphasising the explanatory power of the subjective, by attempting to understand action within the actors own frame of reference, still focuses on the inter-relationship between the objective and the subjective, the individual and the structural. The notion of subjective career does have explanatory power, which "becomes apparent when personal interpretations enter the picture and modify behaviour from what would be predicted on the basis of an objective approach" ^{75.}; but it needs to be related to individual's objective careers, and the changes taking place in these

To what extent, then, is it possible to develop a fuller understanding of the routes girls are taking, specifically of the constraints on the choices they are making, in the ways outlined on P.17 and 18 of this chapter, by a study of their objective and subjective careers during a period when changes are taking place in their educational/occupational status - changes, for example, from compulsory to non-compulsory education; from full time to part time education; from school to college; and of course out of education into full time employment? To what extent is it possible to identify direct constraints on their careers - arising primarily from their location in the social structure? To what extent are the major constraints subjective ones, arising out of their subjective careers? And what is the relationship between their objective and subjective careers? These are the questions which originally informed this research; the methods by which they were tackled are outlined in the the following chapter.

Constraints on methodology

It was outlined in the previous chapter how the nature of the problem area and the questions it raises suggest the necessity of a theoretical approach which emphasises the significance of the subjective side of social experience, but which also admits the importance of analysis of those objective factors which influence behaviour. It was suggested that it was symbolic interactionism with its emphasis on the subjective world of definitions, experiences, and reactions, and the need for the sociologist to penetrate this world, which provides the most suitable theoretical framework for this research. And it was proposed that, by planning the research as a study of the careers, in both the objective and subjective senses, of a group of girls involved in the transition from school/further education/to work, it should be possible to gain some understanding of the relationship between objective and subjective constraints on the routes they were taking.

Different theoretical approaches generate different methodologies. One important constraint on the choice of methodology, then, stemmed from the theoretical framework. A theoretical framework that stresses the subjective side of social experience demands a methodology that, first of all, explicitly focuses on such data, that involves getting as close to the actor, his conceptions of reality, as possible; and, with that, a methodology that recognizes the limitations of the sociologist's conception of the subject matter and his preconceived schemes; that emphasises the importance of exploratory research - and of grounding theory in the data as it emerges. But in addition to this primary constraint stemming from the theoretical framework, there were other constraints on the choice of methodology - notably the need to introduce into

the analysis the objective constraints and limitations on the girls' careers; the need to trace the girls' careers over a protracted period if full understanding of the objective/subjective relationship was to be achieved; and also, of course, those practical constraints, stemming from the researcher's personal circumstances, which made a long term piece of research a feasible proposition.

And these constraints gave rise to two very clear (related) methodological orientations which will be developed below. Towards an exploratory small scale study, working within the tradition established by Glaser and Strauss in their work on grounded theory ^{1.}; and towards some form of case study, or limited life history approach, as developed in the 1930's and 40's by sociologists trained at the University of Chicago in the kind of work developed by Park and Burgess ^{2.}.

Exploratory research

'Exploratory' research implies that the research worker enters the field only with a broadly defined problem area and some "sensitising concepts" or conceptual guides as to what might be significant ^{3.}. Geer ^{4.}, for example, has given the term "working hypothesis" to those drawn up before entering the field - broadly, a list of variables which theory and common sense suggest might be relevant. That is, problems are not sharpened into specific research hypotheses at an early stage because, although this may make it easier to "program" the action, it puts limits on what can be found. This initial phase, then, is one when, guided by broadly defined research interests, data is collected with a view to trying out a wide range of possible ideas and lines of enquiry.

Although it is certainly possible to outline broad phases in the development of exploratory research studies (Becker ^{5.}, for example, suggests three stages of analysis in the field - the

selection and definition of problems, concepts and indices; checking the frequency and distribution of phenomena; and constructing a model, a statement of a set of complicated inter-relationships among many variables) the essential point is that research proceeds through the constant interplay of data gathering and analysis, with the aim of identifying the variables that are important, finding the right questions to ask about them, and generating hypotheses about their relationship. As research proceeds, significant classes of persons and events begin to emerge, the initial research problem may undergo reformulation, propositions are formulated with reference to specific aspects of the field of study and, through the processes of theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation, a number of hypotheses may begin to emerge ⁶.

But what is the position of exploratory research in relation to the development of theory? It is certainly possible ⁷ to argue that the qualitative researcher is to be judged by his ability to provide an orderly presentation of rich descriptive detail by moving close to a social setting, by showing what are the characteristics of a social phenomenon, what forms it assumes, what variations it displays. That his aim is analytical description - a balance between abstract general concepts on the one hand and description and quotations on the other. And that the major criterion of validity is that what he says be acknowledged as valid by members of the social world he is studying. Thus he is not searching for causes and that if there should be any tentative efforts towards explaining patterns which emerge it must be recognized that this is only conjecture. From this position, the qualitative piece of research can be seen to be a useful starting point for more quantitative studies in that it gives a sense of what a phenomenon is like and what variables may be important in understanding it ⁸.

But it can also be argued that exploratory research does

have an important role to play in the generation of theory. As Glaser and Strauss have argued in their work on grounded theory ⁹. "while verifying is the researcher's principal and vital task for existing theories, we suggest that his main goal in developing new theories is their purposeful and systemic generation from the data of social research. Of course verifying as much as possible with as accurate evidence as possible is requisite while one discovers and generates his theory, but not to the point where verification becomes so paramount as to curb generation since accurate evidence is not so crucial for generating theory, the kind of evidence, as well as the number of cases, is also not so crucial. A single case can indicate a general conceptual category or property. A few more cases can confirm the indication." And central to this is the importance of grounding theory in data. "It means that every proposition uttered, indeed every declarative sentence, is a datum or derivative of data, that the data are demonstrably empirical, and that they are empirically and logically related to the propositions stated and that the researcher has found no negative evidence bearing directly upon them." ¹⁰. And it is through grounding theory in data in this way that theory is generated.

Life Histories

The second methodological orientation suggested by the constraints outlined at the start of this chapter is towards some form of life history methodology. As defined by Denzin "the life history presents the experiences and definitions held by one person, one group, or one organization, as this person, group, organization, interprets those experiences central assumptions of the life history are that ^{human} conduct is to be studied and understood from the perspectives of the persons involved all data that reflect upon this perspective will be employed." ¹¹. The focus in the life history is thus on the subject's definition of the situation, taking

precedence over the objective situation because, as Thomas has argued, "very often it is the wide discrepancy between the situation as it seems to others, and the situation as it seems to the individual, that brings out the overt behaviour difficulty ... if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." 12.

According to Denzin, life histories may be complete or topical (exploring only one phase of a subject's life.) He considers that a piece of research based on the life history method should start with a series of problems to be explored, and then a record of the objective events and experiences in the subject's life that pertain to that problem (triangulated by source and perspective to establish contradictions and consistencies). A record of the subject's interpretations of these events as they occurred - using letters, diaries, interviews, etc. - is the focal point of the research; that is, the subject becomes the main source of data on the outline. There is then a process of testing and refuting the hypotheses that have emerged, through successive questioning and probing, to develop grounded theory.

From this very broad outline it will be clear, then, that there is a close relationship between the life history method and "symbolic interactionism. The life history method presents a person's experiences as he defines them. And, representing as it does a major approach to the sensitising concept strategy of theory development and verification, it clearly is an important form of exploratory research. But it has additional advantages as a form of methodology for this study in that, firstly, through its emphasis on laying out objective events and experiences primarily it makes sure that subjective experiences are placed in relation to these. And secondly, it is also a method which makes possible the capturing of events over time - "concern will be directed to recording the unfolding history of one person, one group, or one organization's

experiences the sociologist employing the method becomes an historian of social life, be it the life of one person or many persons similarly situated." ¹³.

It seemed, then, that there were certainly arguments, in the light of the constraints outlined at the start, in favour of using some form of life history method as the type of exploratory research best suited to this study.

Accounts emerging from this type of research are often accused of being "impressionistic", "subjective", "biased", "idiosyncratic". It has certainly already been made clear that exploratory research follows very rigorous procedures - it does demand a theoretical perspective or framework for gaining conceptual entry into the subject matter and for raising the relevant questions; it does need a careful description of the variables starting off the research; and the development of grounded theory necessitates rigorous testing, the researcher rendering explicit the process by which data and findings are produced. But it is through discussions of external and internal validity that these issues are best resolved.

External validity: definition of the population to be studied

First, then, how can we be sure that the results of the research are applicable to other situations? This is the basic question behind discussions of external validity. Very broadly, external validity demands that the sociologist demonstrate that the case selected for study is representative of the population to which he wishes to generalise, and he must also show that the restrictions arising from time and spacial location have been considered and adequately treated ¹⁴. But this general definition raises problems. It is necessary to refer again at this stage to the distinction between those sociologists who see research of this type as exclusively idiographic - descriptive of particular situations under

study, with the aim simply of greater understanding of the social action in the situation, attempting to formulate lawful statements that pertain only to that case; and those who see it as nomothetic - generalising, comparative, theoretical, with the aim of generalising the cases analysed to the total population. The position taken here is that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to have rich and intensive description and generalisability.

"Through the detailed study of one particular case or context or situation, it is still possible to clarify relationships, pinpoint critical processes and identify common phenomena. From these, abstracted summaries and general concepts can be formulated." ¹⁵.

As shown in the work of e.g. Willis, Hargreaves,¹⁶ data from one site generates theory to be tested elsewhere. If the population under study is carefully defined, this lays the ground work for generalisability. And the following section will consist of such a definition; an outline of the way the population was chosen and its characteristics

The very general requirement at the start of the research was that the population to be studied should be girls who would be making decisions about their educational and occupational futures during the period of the study - that they would, during the research, be embarking on those routes which, for many girls, lead to the female sectors of employment. That is, that they should be girls who had not yet made definite occupational decisions, had not yet entered any kind of employment or specialised vocational training; should in fact still be in a "general education" routes at the start of the research. (Although it was of course recognized that some specialization and divergence of routes occurs early in the secondary school). And it was also hoped that it might be possible to work with girls who were not confronted with the additional constraints on choice stemming from low socio-economic status of their families (see Chapter I) or from "low ability", however this is defined; in

that the absence of such constraints would make it easier to identify those constraints derived specifically from their sex.

One possibility was to study girls in their last year at secondary school (last, that is, in terms of the statutory school leaving age of sixteen). But it was decided to consider first the possibility of girls starting a general course at a Further Education College. This decision was made initially on three grounds - the researcher's own greater knowledge of further education; the flexibility and perhaps greater ease of entry to a Further Education College; and the knowledge that girls in their last year at school do not necessarily make decisions about the routes they are to take until near the end of the year. In fact, as the possibility of studying girls in further education was investigated further, it became clear that this would have several additional advantages over school based research. Girls enrolling at a college of further education could be expected (but this was only conjecture) to have greater aspirations or expectations, a useful starting point from which to trace the development of their careers; Further Education Colleges generally have a high "wastage rate" so that it could be expected that girls really would be deciding about routes during the research; and girls in further education are often of average ability - the top level of ability staying on into school with forms aiming for higher education, and the lower levels entering employment immediately - so that the potential destination in the occupational structure of girls on further education general courses may cover a wide range. These conjectures added up to a more "fruitful" population to be studied (if they proved correct) - more decisions, covering a wider range of routes - but there was certainly an expectation at this stage of the research that practical constraints might result in a need for redefinition of the working population.

There were over a dozen colleges in the surrounding area.

The first step was to see if one of these satisfied three criteria - that it had some groups of girl students just starting non-vocational general courses, presumably GCE courses, preferably not all hoping to enter higher education (thus deferring occupational decisions); that it should be near enough to allow for frequent short visits (envisaging timetable difficulties for interviewing); and that it should provide easy access and cooperation. If these requirements did not turn out to be feasible it was intended to reconsider working in a school.

Planning to work outwards in terms of distance, a meeting was arranged with the Further Education advisor for the researcher's own local authority (March 1976). He was able to suggest a college which had a large number of general courses, with more than 1,000 students, very few of ^{them} going on to higher education, and suggested two contacts - the deputy principal and the student counsellor. The deputy principal was contacted almost immediately and presented with a research outline. He gave permission for the research and suggested the careers officer as a "guide" to the college. Entry, then, had been achieved very easily into a college which seemed it would provide, if any college would, a suitable group of girls to be the subject of the research. The decision not to search further was a purely practical one; this college was near the researcher's home and more time would be taken up in pursuing the possibilities of other colleges which, from their prospectuses, did not seem so appropriate. The ease of entry past the first "gate-keeper" can only be attributed to the colleges being very "research-orientated"; although the research was discussed there was no specifications of limits, asking for returns, etc. - it was an unconditional "go ahead".

But from then on, problems arose which approximated much more closely to those outlined by other researchers. The careers

officer, who was the next "gate-keeper" was unenthusiastic and discouraging, emphasising the practical difficulties (mainly due to individual timetabling) of locating and carrying out interviews with any group of girls. Eventually a period of "orientation" within the college was arranged, the researcher taking some liberal studies classes. (The research programme proper was not scheduled to start until the following September). ¹⁷. And then, from discussions with students in these classes, and staff, and on the basis of increasing familiarity with the organisation of the college, it was decided to use the tutorial group system to locate a group of girls to be studied. Each student is allocated to a tutor who is to be a source of advice and information during his time at college. Students were usually allocated to a tutor who did actually teach them. Two tutors agreed to cooperate by making it possible for the researcher to meet the first year members of their tutorial groups at the first meeting of the academic year, with the aim of outlining the research programme and arranging further contact. One tutor was a biology lecturer, the other specialized in English, so that the members of their groups could be expected to be studying biology and English, respectively, as one of their subjects.

Entry is a continuous process of establishing and developing relationships, of negotiating separate "gate-keepers" ¹⁸. Entry into the college had been easy. But the second stage, of attempting to establish a line of communication, to actually locate a group of girls within the college, had proved more difficult. The doubts of the careers officer about the feasibility of the study had been most threatening, coming as it did so early in the development of a research strategy and when the college was still very unfamiliar. The taking on of a limited teaching role had enabled more contacts to be made within the college; had made acceptance easier; had overcome the dependence on one line of communication, one perspective;

had clarified what kind of student would be most useful for the research; and had made it easier to find and approach the two tutors who provided access to their groups.

The research was, then, to be based on seventeen girls, comprising all the first year girls from two tutorial groups, just starting Ordinary, Advanced (or a combination of O and A) level GCE courses in September 1976. What, then, can be said of the representativeness of these girls, and their suitability as a case study?

The first point to make, in any discussion of generalisability is that, as students in further education, not in schools, these girls were a minority; only 11.1% of girls aged sixteen to eighteen at that time (1976-7) were in further education ¹⁹. - the others were still in school, in employment, or in higher education. And it seemed that, as such, they might have specific characteristics. A recent national survey ²⁰ has pointed out, in its preliminary conclusions, that whilst one of the main reasons for going into further education rather than remaining at school is the availability of subjects at college, greater personal freedom is also important; and, in addition, those who leave school for further education tend to be the less academically able and the less well qualified who may be looking for a second chance. And this seems to be supported by what is known of further education in the local area. The organization of post sixteen education in the borough at that time was such that any girl of sixteen, whether at grammar school or secondary modern - or from outside the area - could apply to one of the two Further Education Colleges. Most of those applying to further education for general - GCE O and A level courses - would be expected to be either from secondary modern schools (with no VIth form or a very small one offering limited A levels) or from grammar schools with either limited entry into the VIth form, or VIth forms not offering specific subjects. But availability of

subjects/courses was not satisfactory as a complete explanation of enrollment at further education. An analysis of the comments made by secondary school teachers, careers officers, college tutors and further education advisors shows that they all attributed certain characteristics to girls who enrol at further education courses in this area. From grammar school they are seen to be the weakest academically; those less willing to work "the ones who decide on further education are not those who will work there" (teacher); the ones who do not fit into school or have "outgrown" it. They are also seen - predominantly from secondary modern schools in this case - as "those who are afraid of being left with nothing, they would rather go to further education than be out of work" or those who have not made up their minds - it's a "safety valve", "it's the thing to do". Leaving aside, regrettably, the ways in which these comments raise questions about the perceptions of tutors, teachers, etc. in relation to college applicants and college students, the significant point is that there seems to be evidence that students studying for GCE courses in further education do have specific characteristics - and this will be in fact demonstrated further when analysing the accounts of the girls in this study of how they came to enrol in further education; characteristics which would make it difficult to generalise to the total population of sixteen to eighteen year old girls.

(Within the college the tutorial system - the basis on which these girls were chosen - has already been explained. Students were allocated to tutorial groups on the basis that the tutor should be teaching one of their subjects. Thus, of these girls, some were doing courses which included biology, others doing courses which included English. There was, however, only one girl studying predominately science subjects; and this bias towards arts subjects is probably also significant in view of the range of constraints

outlined in Chapter I. There was nothing at the start of the research to suggest that these girls might be different from other girls studying GCE courses - perhaps biased towards arts subjects - at the college; although feedback from the two tutors towards the end did suggest that these two groups had had a higher than usual drop out rate.)

So, few claims are being made for the "representativeness" of this group of girls. In that they were girls between sixteen and eighteen studying general (GCE) courses biased towards arts subjects in a Further Education College, they had very specific characteristics. But a very strong case can be presented in terms of their suitability as a case study.

It had been hoped, at the start, to work with a group whose occupational decisions could be expected to be little constrained by factors such as socio economic status of their families and ability; so that it would be possible to identify clearly those constraints which were predominately a product of their being girls. In terms of socio economic status, this seemed to have been achieved. Fathers' occupations (engineer, chartered engineer, butcher, manager on building site, labour relations manager, owning own small business before becoming invalide, university lecturer, designer draughtsman, technical representative (engineering), research chemist, chief engineer, airport groundstaff) placed the majority of the girls in the families of non-manual/professional workers. Thus it seemed possible that their occupational choices would not be constrained (or would be less constrained than those of girls from lower socio economic groups) by those factors (e.g. family pressure to start work immediately, family lack of involvement in education) which have been identified ²¹. as occurring more frequently in families belonging to the lower socio economic groups. One additional point in this context is that two of the girls were from Eastern

* Fuller details are given in Appendix 2

+ A further discussion of this is contained in the glossary at the end.

European families which, as will emerge during the research, had a tradition of high aspirations and extended education, for their children.

The question of ability was more complicated. The aim had been to work with a group of girls of "average ability" - as measured by educational qualifications. But of course the relationship between ability and qualifications is a complex one, the latter being in themselves a product of a variety of constraints. Having stated this reservation, however, it does seem that the qualifications of these girls at the start of the study were such as to justify labelling them, very loosely, of "average ability". By this is meant simply that they were certainly not among the least able of school leavers in terms of qualifications - all, except Vivienne, had some CSE's or O levels at the start. And only one had more than five O levels, so that, again, they were not of the ability level which would be more likely to carry on to higher education. *

It can, then, be argued that the location of these girls in terms of socioeconomic status of their families, and ability level as measured by qualifications, makes them a suitable case study; suitable in that it can be expected that they will be constrained by factors that are a product of class † and ability position less than many girls; and that it will consequently be possible to trace more clearly the constraints that are a product of their position

in a system of sexual stratification.

And the location, identification and definition of the population to be studied, as outlined in this section, now makes possible a clearer statement of the aims of the research. The aim is to trace the careers, in the objective and subjective senses, of a group of girls, predominately middle class and of average ability, during a period when they are making educational/occupational choices, making the transition from one educational/occupational route to another, with the intention of gaining a greater understanding of the constraints on this process. Starting with a description and analysis of the way their careers have been constrained before the start of the research, the major aim will be to trace the changes, modifications, in these careers during the period they are at college, up to and including their departure, their transition to employment or other educational routes.

How, then, is this to be done? The following section will consist of a discussion of some of the issues raised by questions of internal validity, as introduced earlier in this chapter.

Internal validity: collection and analysis of data

The research was designed, then, to follow the procedures set out by Denzin²² in his account of the life history method (although with obvious modifications due primarily to the ongoing nature of the work). Sources of data were to be, on the one hand, schools, careers officers, course tutors, advisors, who provided (and triangulated) the information concerning the girls' objective careers; and, the main body of the work, the girls' own accounts of their careers.

Before discussing in detail the nature of the data arising from the girls' accounts, it is necessary to outline briefly the ways in which data was collected on the girls' objective careers.

The aim of this section of the research was to have information on ways in which the girls' careers may have been constrained before the start of the research (primarily by factors relating to their educational experience); and to be aware of changes in these constraints during their time at college. And to have a clear picture of the opportunities in education and employment confronting these girls before and during their time at college.

One important source of information was the schools in the borough. Five schools - two girls grammar schools, one mixed secondary modern, one girls secondary modern and one girls Catholic secondary modern - were visited. They were chosen on the basis of having had at least one girl in the group as a pupil; and with the aim of getting a balance of types of schools in the borough. The person "responsible for careers work" was seen at each school, with the stated aim of clarifying "ways in which girls were prepared for employment", including consideration of school curriculum, careers advice, employment opportunities. (These will of course all be discussed in Chapter 3.) In most cases the teacher did not know personally the girl in the group from the school, or did not remember her clearly, so that the hopes of getting some idea of the schools' "perception" of the girls was not fulfilled. But a bonus was that all the schools did have very clear perceptions of further education applicants and were able to enlarge considerably on this. The teachers were very responsive - in giving of their time and information - a response which had not been expected because of the "threatening nature" of the careers work aspect of the research, limited as it was in so many schools in the borough. (The information provided by the schools was checked/verified by local education authority advisors, one for secondary education and one for further education.)

Although the schools had been able to provide some

information on the types of openings/opportunities in employment and education for school leavers, attempts were made to develop and expand this picture, particularly in view of the very limited types of openings the schools were considering. And with this aim, reference was made again to national statistics and careers guides; and contact was made with the local authority careers service, representatives of the (local) Employment Service Agency, a manager of the local employment office (who was also a member of an Industrial Estates Committee urging the borough's education committee to try to interest girls in school in engineering and technology); and of course the college careers officer and tutors also provided relevant information.

Reference has already been made in Chapter I to the national situation, and the kinds of factors which need to be considered in discussing employment opportunities for girls. But attempts to get a picture of local patterns of entry to employment and local opportunities proved surprisingly difficult. As in the case of the schools, careers officers, college tutors and other professionals were all able to give very definite outlines of the opportunities they considered open to these girls - outlines corresponding very closely to the national picture of entry into limited areas of work. But it proved very difficult to gain any detailed information on local opportunities against which to set these statements, either on routes into education/employment taken by sixteen to seventeen year olds (girls) in the last couple of years, or on the openings now available in education and employment. The careers service had, until 1975, been responsible for providing an insurance card and number for all people starting work, but had lost this means of obtaining information on all new entrants to employment and had not yet evolved new procedures. The college careers officer was also unable to provide figures of

destinations of those leaving college although she was planning to start a system of recording this information the following year. Similarly, in relation to the openings available, the careers service was only able to provide very fragmented statistics of opportunities at that time, for example, an analysis of the vacancy register in a typical week "picking the kind of vacancies your girls are most likely to be considering" (mostly clerical). And the representative of the local (Manchester) Employment Service Agency, although again very enthusiastic and responsive, was similarly unable to provide relevant details of openings. The result of these investigations at the start, then, was that it was difficult to get a detailed picture of the local opportunity structure, either from analysis of the routes taken by sixteen to seventeen year old girls recently, or by an analysis of current openings. Perhaps the most significant point to emerge in this respect was that very little consideration had been given to what might be available for girls who were leaving school with some, but not many, qualifications.

In addition to the two main lines of investigation developed above, there were additional sources of information, namely college tutors, LEA advisors and parents. College tutors (the two whose groups were involved and others who stood in for them during illness) provided a wide range of information - on college policy and administrative changes affecting the girls; on the help and advice the girls were seeking or needing; and on the girls' academic progress. They were, to some degree, "informants", in the sense in which "Doc." in St. Corner Society is the classic example ²³. - individuals who were able to "translate" much that was happening in the college. The advisors were contacted towards the end of the research to check on e.g. curriculum differentiation in the secondary schools, careers work, movements between school and further

education and the organization of further education. And finally, although direct contact with parents had not been part of the research outline, some were spoken to during the process of interviewing the girls and acted as further source of information and a way of checking the information gained from girls, teachers and ³careers officers, on their perspectives.

Use was made, then, of a variety of sources of information. But the main part of the research consisted of the gathering of data from the girls themselves, by unstructured interviewing. The girls were met initially on their first day at college (an "induction" day, a week before term started) in their tutorial groups when the research was explained to them. The following week they received their individual timetables and appointments were made for the first interviews (subsequent appointments were arranged by telephone). The first interviews took place during the first two weeks of term (1976). The intention was to continue the interviews at regular intervals until they left college or even, if possible, to see them at least once after they had left (and in fact some of the "early leavers" were included in later sets of interviews). All the girls were interviewed at approximately three monthly intervals for one year, with additional interviews for those who left during the year. Interviews were continued less frequently during the second year with those still at college, finishing in late August when A level results were known. One girl continued at college for a third year and was interviewed until the end of her course. (Three monthly intervals had been aimed at initially because it was felt that frequent contact with the girls would both make easy communication more likely and would decrease the possibility of distortion due to "retrospective accounts" ²⁴. By the end of the first year it was felt that the first reason no longer applied - relationships between the girls and the researcher had been established; and

whilst the second reason still applied it was outweighed by a disadvantage which had not been thought of originally. This was the pressure on the girls from being asked frequently about occupational plans when they did not have any, or were being increasingly worried about their occupational futures. Because of the danger of this threatening the relationships built up, and of the danger of their attempting to "construct accounts".²⁵, it was felt that longer intervals - approximately six months - between interviews would be more satisfactory.) One girl refused any form of contact from the start, and after repeated efforts to "find her" she was crossed off the list; and two girls became very unwilling to be interviewed after leaving college during the first year, but eventually wrote very long letters. Apart from these, every girl attended every interview when asked.

Most of the data was gathered by informal interviews - unstructured and non directive. Generally, the distinction is drawn between these and structured, formal interviews, with set questions. These latter have the advantage of comparability of data and replication, especially if answers are precoded. But by assuming knowledge of the important questions, by imposing categories with which respondents may not be familiar, research using structured interviews may exclude much relevant material. If the aim is to find out what is important and significant to the respondent in relation to a given topic, unstructured interviewing is a more appropriate strategy, interviewing where the emphasis is on obtaining accounts in the respondents own terms²⁶. Basic to any form of unstructured interviewing, that is, whether labelled informal, non directive, intensive, is the need for a "flexible strategy of discovery"²⁷. The object is to "elicit from the interviewee what he considers to be important questions relative to a given topic, his descriptions of some situation being explored

to carry on a guided conversation and to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis" ²⁸. And this is achieved by a variety of techniques ²⁹, including the use of interview guides, "a list of questions sufficiently flexible to order in any way that seems natural, developed from the researcher's general idea of what would comprise the account and which he would clarify by probing if necessary, whilst still allowing time to be interested in what the respondent provided spontaneously". ³⁰. Intensive interviews, then, are considered to be, have shown themselves to be, a reliable tool of investigation, and the following section will consist of a discussion of how they were used in this study - the form of interview guide used, techniques for achieving a high level of response, and attempts to guard against bias.

The interview guide for the first set of interviews was based (after gathering preliminary information on age, educational experience, etc.) on three very general questions. "What are you going to do after college?" "When did you start thinking about what you wanted to do?" and "Why did you come to college?" Their order, and their form, seemed to have the advantage of both seeming "reasonable" questions to a respondent, ones which could be "answered in some way; and ones which should make it possible to gather, by probing when necessary, information on those areas already identified as being significant in terms of the questions posed by the research. Subsequent interviews whilst the girls were still at college all started with the same question "Have you done any more thinking about what you are going to do?" And interviews with girls immediately after they had left were also designed on the basis of one starting question "Tell me what happened since I saw you last." Additional questions were asked at each set of interviews either for clarification or to increasingly focus the research; questions which were part of a process of theoretical

saturation, whereby material bearing on a particular theme which seemed to be emerging as significant was sought and accumulated from all sources.

A very high level of response was achieved in the study, both in terms of girls keeping their interview appointments and in terms of responsiveness during interviews. As outlined above, all, with a few exceptions, kept their appointments - and in a few cases this meant six months after leaving college. And although some girls were less responsive than others during the interviews, all spoke, and attempted to speak, as fully as possible. And it is suggested that this cooperation was achieved by three specific techniques or aims during the fieldwork ³¹. First, a climate was created in which the respondent would feel free to talk. Important in this respect were a small secluded private room in the college for interviewing; assurances of anonymity and confidentiality; and a knowledge that the researcher was not involved in the situation being discussed, did not have a perceived role in relation to either judgement or to use of information. Secondly, attempts were made to enable the interview to build up into a free conversation. Interviews were recorded, removing the necessity of note-taking. But, most importantly, great care was taken over the questioning. Questions were open ended, allowing girls to follow lines of thought which seemed relevant to them, with supplementary questions organized to coincide with their accounts; and questions were made as meaningful to them as possible. Questions demanding a direct concise answer, or lacking in meaning to them, it was discovered very early, not only halted their accounts, and received "stock answers" but also could have resulted in their defining the interviews not as a "chance to talk" but as a threatening or difficult situation which they might try to avoid. Thus the basic principle behind the interviewing technique was one of waiting to see what

seemed important to the respondents. And thirdly, a very determined effort was made to build a relationship with the girls by developing an "image" to which they would want to respond; by giving them a full account of the research and keeping them informed of its progress; by being very considerate in arranging interview times; and by trying to give something in return - if only someone to talk to.

What, then, of the validity of the data gathered from these interviews? There has, first of all, been plenty of discussion within sociology of the advantages and disadvantages of any form of interviewing as a research method; but in view of the constraints on methodology outlined at the start of the chapter, all that is significant here is discussion of the relative merits of relying on interviewing as a sole technique as against methods of participant observation - or interviewing combined with participant observation. It has been argued ³². that the dangers of relying solely on any form of interviewing is that individuals are not able to describe and explain their actions, that there may be no relationship between what people say and what they do, that there is a danger of assuming understanding, that many events are so regular that the respondents may not think to comment on them, or so unfamiliar that they cannot put them into words. But these criticisms are not of great significance in this case because of the central importance of the girls' perspectives, definitions, interpretations, in the research outline. One premise of the research was that the causal accounts offered by the subjects of the research were important. "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" ³³. If the girls believed the school was not interested in them, that they had had little help in making occupational decisions, that there were lots of openings in "interesting" areas of employment, that college staff were exerting unfair pressure on them to make

occupational decisions, etc., then these were significant sets of data for the research. And, correspondingly, questions of "truth" and "reliability" are meaningless if judged in terms of correspondence to the "facts" as presented by other, more "reliable" individuals, or in terms of consistency over a period of time. Their accounts did differ from those of, for example, the schools in the case of careers advice, and their accounts were sometimes inconsistent - they changed from one meeting to the next; but these considerations were themselves important sets of data. This does not mean, of course, that these subjective interpretations, meanings, etc. were taken completely at face value - and other sources of information were used on the girls' objective careers - but it does justify the use of interviewing as the main research technique.

But there are other criticisms relating more closely to unstructured interviewing and in particular the "reactive" effects of the research, which now have to be considered; the most relevant for this study being, firstly, the fact that the interview is a "situation in its own right" ³⁴; that what individuals say during an interview reflects the situation, bias and distortion possibly occurring due to the inter-relationship between the ascribed characteristics (age, sex, class) and roles of the interviewer and interviewee and to the nature of the interview situation itself; and, secondly, that distortion may occur in any research involving an individuals interpretations, definitions, of what has happened to him due to the way in which every individual constructs an "image of his life course — past, present and future—which selects, abstracts and distorts in such a way as to provide him with a view of himself that he can usefully expound in current situations." ³⁵. And Goffman goes on to point out that this "apologia" is to bring the individual into appropriate alignment with the basic values of society. "If a person can manage to present a view of his current

situation which shows the operation of favourable personal qualities in the past and a favourable destiny awaiting him, it may be called a success story. If the facts of a person's past or present are extremely dismal then about the best he can do is to show that he is not responsible for what has become of him, and the term "sad tale" is appropriate.³⁶ And it can certainly be argued that both these sources of bias are very relevant to any discussion of the internal validity of this work. That, in particular, the girls' responses need to be placed in the context of the interview situation, of a situation in which there was continual questioning about their occupational plans; that it is necessary to be aware of ways in which their efforts to provide relevant data and not let the researcher feel she was wasting her time could result in over emphasis, for example, of the extent to which they had made occupational choices, of their commitment to a "career". And the possibility of this type of distortion is further supported by the above quotation from Goffman. It could certainly be expected that both the aims of the study and possibly the need for alignment with those values stressing the importance of educational and occupational achievement, could result in an image of their life course in which occupational success was central and any failings in this respect were not of their own making; were a product, possibly, of the negative aspects of their preparation for employment.

But these possible sources of bias, it is argued, are not calling into question the internal validity of the work; and this is due to a number of safeguards built into both the interview situation and the process of analysis. That, on the one hand, as shown earlier in this chapter, the girls were in a situation where they were not being judged, there were no expectations of them, no pressures on them. They did not need to provide "shutting up accounts"³⁷ and they understood this; they understood that all

data was of interest and value for the research work. Furthermore, it can be added that the frequency of contact, and the number of contacts, would result in their soon abandoning attempts to "put on a performance". And another safeguard was provided by the use of "triangulation" - the checking of the girls' accounts from a variety of sources so that, for example, a girl's claims that she wanted to go to university would be validated by information from her tutor that she was looking at prospectuses or, later, filling in UCCA forms. But the final safeguard, of course, rests with the practice of those rigorous procedures of analysis outlined at the start of this chapter. The findings outlined in this report are not only generated in the data of the interviews - have been induced from the data as it is revealed—but are a product of those processes of theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation outlined by Glaser and Strauss in their work on grounded theory ³⁸.

One final point concerns the question of the researcher's involvement in the work - not only the extent to which there was a possibility of the researcher actively offering help and advice (this was not a big problem in that the girls were very clearly defining the situation as one in which the researcher was simply a sympathetic listener), but also the extent to which she was "taking sides" with the girls. Was there in fact a danger of over rapport? Was she seeing the girls through her own eyes too unquestioningly, accepting too readily their accounts? Becker suggests that the sociologist can never avoid taking sides; "official versions will differ from those of subordinates; and the way to satisfy the demands of science is to make clear through whose eyes the study has been done and the limits which this imposes on it." ³⁹

It must be made clear here, then, that whilst, certainly, information was gained from a variety of sources, the central concern of the study was the girls' accounts - their subjective definitions,

interpretations and meanings. And that quite possibly this gave rise to a different kind of approach to understanding the routes the girls took than would have resulted from focusing on, for example, the perspectives of teachers or college staff.

* Full details are given in Appendix 2.

Chapter 3. Early days: The significance of college as a means of articulating objective and subjective careers.

As already outlined in Chapter 2, this report is based on data gathered, by interview, from sixteen girls aged sixteen to seventeen at the start of the fieldwork. All but one were straight from school - seven from grammar schools, seven from secondary moderns, and two from comprehensives outside the L.E.A.: most were single sex schools. Their qualifications ranged from one girl with none at all to one girl with nine O levels, but most had some O levels or CSEs. They had enrolled for GCE courses at the Further Education College - O level, A level or a combination, planned to last one, two or three years. *

This chapter is based on data gathered from the first set of interviews in September 1976, at the time of their enrollment and first week at the college. The aim of this chapter will be, firstly, to discuss the objective constraints on these girls' careers at the start of the research - the extent to which the choices they could make, the routes they could take, had been already limited by the start of the research; and the extent to which it seemed that their careers could be further constrained by objective factors in the future. This will be followed by an analysis of their subjective careers, again asking to what extent it seemed that subjective factors had been, and were likely to be, important sources of constraint on their choices. And this framework of objective and subjective careers will be used as a basis for attempting to understand the routes the girls have taken at the start of the research.

Objective career constraints

It will be suggested in this section that, in terms of their educational qualifications and the structure of opportunities in general in further education/training/employment, it is possible to identify significant objective constraints on these girls' careers;

but that the existence of easy access on to general courses in further education makes it possible to argue that, potentially at least, many routes were still open to them.

First, then, it is clear that any discussion of objective constraints must start with their educational qualifications - their level and their range. And the first point to make about these is that, with the exception of Vivienne, they all had some O level GCEs or some CSEs - they were not among the least qualified of school leavers. Anna had nine O levels; Elizabeth, Liese, Janet, June and Gillian had five O levels or their equivalent i.e. CSE Grade 1's; the others had only a few CSEs or O levels. (The secondary modern school girls all had predominantly CSE qualifications - all the secondary modern schools in the borough at that time except one offered more subjects for CSE than for O level. And the girls' experience, from their own accounts and from the schools, was that you had to be specifically "picked out" - and work out of school hours - if you wanted to do O levels. "Only the teacher's pets took O levels" (Christine); "I took a few O levels by staying behind - it depended on whether the teacher was prepared to stay behind - I was lucky" (Janet); "We all did CSE then two or three weeks before the exams the teachers got together and decided who would do O levels, we were never really taught for O levels." (Elizabeth)) But although they were leaving school with some qualifications, the majority of them, in that they did not have five O levels, had not achieved the level of qualification most usually demanded - and this will be further developed below - for entry to many areas of training and further education, as well as to many types of employment; e.g. A level courses in VIth forms, SRN training, OND Business Studies in further education, higher grades of local authority/Civil Service employment.

Level of qualification, then, is an important constraint

on these girls. But possibly of greater significance is the range of their qualifications, in that these did not, for the most part, include any scientific, technical or craft subjects - and nor did they have any experience of these. A major constraint arising from their educational experiences, that is, was a product of the fact that, whether they were at single sex or mixed schools, these girls had experienced curricula strictly divided according to sex, and their qualifications were subsequently very limited. None of the girls had done any work in technical drawing, woodwork, metalwork, etc. - in girls schools because it was not part of the curricula and in mixed schools because of cross timetabling. This was stated clearly by the schools (one school had pink "option" sheets for girls, blue for boys; and another expressed pride in their "good commercial course for the girls" to explain the absence of other subjects); and confirmed by a contemporary C.A.S.E. Report (1977) stating that technical subjects and engineering were found in the borough only in the boys' schools, domestic and commercial subjects only in the girls'. (It also emerged clearly from the girls' accounts as will be developed throughout this report.) Similarly, at an academic level, very few of the girls had science - except biology - or mathematics qualifications, O level or CSE. One headmistress of a secondary modern school (it was in secondary moderns that this limitation was most evident) had stated quite clearly "We are strong on arts subjects, not maths or science", and it would seem that this could be echoed by several of the girls secondary moderns in the borough. These girls, then, had been channelled along curricular routes leading to restricted opportunities. They did not have the educational qualifications in the right subjects to gain access to many areas of employment or further training - for example, most apprenticeships demand previous knowledge of technical subjects; engineering courses in further education whether general, ONC or technicians demand maths and a science; as does training for many

paramedical fields of employment. Equally significant, of course, is the consequence of limited curricula for the girls' "orientation" towards employment. Not only were they not qualified to enter many areas of employment/training, they did not consider them. And whilst the significance of the lack of craft/technical subjects was already apparent at the start of the research, in that their occupational aims were directed towards "women's jobs", the lack of science was only to become fully apparent at a later stage.

Given the nature of their educational qualifications, what routes, then, were open to these girls? And to what extent is it possible to distinguish direct constraints on their careers other than those related to their educational qualifications; constraints arising possibly from the characteristics of the labour market - both local and national - and the organisation of post sixteen education and training?

As noted already in Chapter I, any discussion of employment opportunities for girls needs to take into consideration (apart from their educational qualifications) the occupational structure in general and the ways in which certain types, areas, of employment are designated "women's work"; the local occupational structure; and national/local levels of employment - or unemployment. In terms of their educational qualifications it has already been made clear that they did not have access, at sixteen, to many areas of employment and training. And that whilst in this respect level and number of their qualifications is important (although careers guides, for example, will list such areas of employment as the police, agriculture, nursing (SEN and NNEB), floristry, hairdressing, the services and work with animals as open to young people with few qualifications, whilst five O levels opens up the possibility of work in, for example, banking, the building societies, computing and higher level work in

local authorities and the Civil Service) it is their lack of technical/scientific background which denied them access to many routes - to employment/training in, for example, the engineering industry, building trades, metal/chemical industries, optical services and many types of paramedical work.

But it is clear also that, within the limits set by their educational qualifications, whilst at that time the characteristics of the local occupational structure, and national/local levels of employment were not significant sources of constraint on what they could do, what was of great significance, in so far as it could be ascertained, was the way in which certain types of work were designated "women's work".

That is, in terms of the local occupational structure, firstly, there were few geographical restrictions on the routes these girls could take. Although the immediate surrounding area was residential, it did include an industrial estate (Broadheath); and the City of Manchester and several large industrial areas, including the ICI complex and the Trafford Park Industrial Estate, were within travelling distance. Few areas of employment, few occupations, needed then to be ruled out as not available locally. Also, at the time of the research, there was very little unemployment for school leavers with some qualifications in the borough. None of those concerned with the placement of school leavers expressed any doubts about girls with some qualifications being able to gain employment. But it does seem, most clearly, that any discussion of constraints must include the way in which certain areas of work are designated women's work and the way in which this was manifest in some of the individuals/agencies responsible for guiding or recruiting girls into employment. There has already been fairly clear specification of the type of occupation, on a national basis, which sixteen year old girl school leavers are most likely to enter and in which they predominate -

clerical work, shop work and unskilled or semiskilled work in certain areas of manufacturing. And it is clear that this is a message which was being transmitted and reinforced by most of those in this area involved in the transition from school to work. Nearly all those interviewed in connection with employment opportunities - local authority careers officers, careers teachers and representatives of the employment service agency (D.E.) - considered that for a girl leaving school with up to five O levels openings were predominately in office and shop work; it was a picture of a very limited range of opportunities and this will be developed throughout this report. There were no accepted, acknowledged routes to other areas of employment - to work or training schemes in the large industrial concerns, for example, or in the big stores. And yet, according to the only "dissenting" voice, the manager of the local employment office, other openings might be found; "Girls are not considering a wide enough range of schemes; large employers in the area - G.E.C., I.C.I., Shell - could consider girls in many types of employment there are opportunities going but the girls have to find them." Managerial attitudes and recruitment policies were not part of this study; but what is being suggested in this section is that any discussion of the employment routes which were open to these girls must involve consideration of the way opportunities were only seen to exist in those areas traditionally designated "women's work" in the area. And in so far as this was the case it was a very significant form of constraint on what these girls could do. They could not enter areas of employment they did not know about or towards which there were no accepted routes - even if the opportunities existed.

To conclude this section, then, it has been shown that, given the nature of their educational qualifications and given the characteristics of the "linking mechanism" particularly - the way qualifications are related to available opportunities - very few

areas of employment/training were "open" to these girls in the case of their attempting to enter employment at the time of the start of the research.

In addition to entering employment, however, it was possible for all the girls to continue in full time education, either by moving into the VIth form of their own school, transferring to the VIth form of another school, or entering a college of further education. Sixth forms varied in size, work (i.e. range of subjects and level of subjects) and entry qualifications, the grammar school VIth forms more usually offering a wide range of A level subjects and demanding four or five O levels for entry qualifications. Secondary moderns usually offered a chance to take O levels after CSE - or more O levels - and offered few, if any, A levels. But more than half the girls did have access to a VIth form, and three had already spent one year in the VIth, starting an A level course (Anna) or taking O levels (Julie S. and June). But of all the routes that were open it was courses in further education which were the most accessible. Although there were restrictions on entry to many further education courses - those "career based" courses in e.g. engineering as outlined above - local further education colleges at that time did offer relatively unrestricted access to a number of courses. The college on which this research was based, for example, demanded only "a satisfactory general education to GCE O level or CSE" for entry to a variety of preprofessional courses in P.E., Drama, Art, Library work and Catering (although competition for entry did raise these levels in practise); entrance by test and personal interview for NNEB Certificate; and a satisfactory school report with preferably some high grade CSEs for Professional Hairdressers Course. And there was, finally, very easy access to a large range of O and A level GCE courses, enrollment depending mainly on interview - the route taken, of course, by the girls in the study.

And it can be argued that it is the existence of this last route - into general GCE courses in further education - which suggests the necessity, in any discussion of objective constraints on these girls' careers, of distinguishing between those constraints - stemming from the nature of their educational qualifications and the way these relate to the occupational structure - which could not now be overcome, which set the parameters within which these girls would have to choose their routes; and those constraints, more in the form of obstacles or hurdles, which it might be possible for them to overcome by enrolling at college. That is, many employment/training routes (in, for example, engineering, the building trades), were completely closed to the girls in view of age limits on entry, limits which they would have passed by the time they had caught up. And it can also be assumed that, given their predominately arts based qualifications, it would now be very difficult for them, even if not totally impossible, to enter at more advanced levels any areas of employment demanding a science background. But there were areas which could still be open to them if they were "successful" at college. In that they were studying for more qualifications, it could be expected that college would result in the opening up of a wider range of courses, training schemes, areas of employment. Thus, for those on A level courses, the achievement of two A levels would open up not only higher education but also training schemes in such areas as retail management, accountancy, surveying, town planning, personnel management, librarianship and the law (solicitor) (all two A level entry); and entrance to the paramedical professions demands one A level, as does entry to HND courses. Similarly, for those on O level courses, the achievement of five O levels would open up the possibility of work in, for example, banking, optical services, meteorology, building societies. And of course they could also continue on to A level courses or "cross over" to ONC/OND, depending on the subjects they had enrolled for at college.

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* A further discussion of this is contained in the glossary at the end.

To conclude this section on the objective constraints on the girls' careers, then, all that is clear at this stage is that here is a group of girls whose careers had already been constrained to some extent prior to their enrollment at college. The routes they could take, the educational and occupational choices they could make, were limited due to the nature of their educational qualifications, the characteristics of post sixteen educational structures and the labour market, and the "linking mechanism" between these two, channelling them into limited areas of employment. But the extent to which the limitations imposed by their qualifications were final, and the extent to which they would be able, at college, to fill in the gaps and achieve a higher level of qualification, would only emerge during the course of the fieldwork.

Subjective careers

Hughes, it will be remembered, defined "subjective career" as "the moving perspective in which a person sees his life as a whole, and interprets his attributes, actions, and the things which happen to him". And it will be argued now, that, at this stage of the research, it seemed that the subjective careers of these girls were best conceptualised in terms of occupational centrality; that their "occupational careers" * played a central part in their "moving perspectives". And that this statement is based on three sets of data; firstly, the lack of any kind of evidence to suggest the centrality of "domestic careers" *; secondly, the occupations they wanted to enter and the reasons for these choices in terms of rejection of ordinary/dead end work; and thirdly, a high level of optimism that it is educational routes which will enable them to enter such occupations.

First, then, there was very little evidence from their accounts at the first set of interviews to suggest the centrality of domestic careers. This is not to reject completely the possibility that they might be significant - questions of bias and distortion in

the research, particularly, have been developed in Chapter 2. But analysis of the first set of interviews shows very few references to early marriage, childbearing and a future of economic dependence. These were not "casting a shadow" over their futures. And, moreover, direct questions on the importance of occupational careers as opposed to domestic careers showed that it was the former which were taking precedence. When asked to outline what they saw themselves doing in ten years time only Julie S. was talking of early marriage, and several said they had no intention of marrying. Others were responding in similar ways to Gillian-"Perhaps I'll get married when I'm twenty seven but I'll carry on working". They were, that is, envisaging themselves continuing in employment throughout their lives even if marriage and childbearing intervened at some stage.

But it is, secondly, in the occupations they were naming as the ones they wished to enter, and the reasons they gave for naming them, that a clearer understanding is gained of their subjective careers. All except three girls named a specific occupation, or occupations, as the ones they were hoping to enter. The occupations named as either first choice or another possibility were P.E. teacher, Domestic Science teacher, primary school teacher, beautician, three times, (there was a two year training course in a nearby college), nursing via a university degree, pharmacy technician, courier, physiotherapist, journalist (twice), fashion photographer, banking or accountancy, and nursing. That is, they were naming areas of employment which, although certainly falling within the category of "women's work" could most definitely not be labelled **dead end**. The occupations they were naming (and even of the three who named no occupation it was clear that this was the type they were thinking of) - with the possible exception of courier - demanded entry qualifications, a period of training, and held, to a large extent, a recognized "career" ladder. And the predominant reasons they gave

* It is important to note the inclusion of teaching and nursing - although very limited - in the following quotations. The significance of this for understanding the girls' subjective careers - the way in which, for some girls at least, these were not glamorous occupations - will become clear during the report.

† The significance of their rejection of some employment as "ordinary" or "routine" and the relationship between such definitions and their rejection of work as dead end will become clear during the study.

for naming these occupations were in terms of their potential "interest" and their being defined as "careers" in contrast to those "boring", "ordinary", "dead end" jobs (usually but not always identified as office work *) which, for example, their schools were suggesting. "I'm not sitting in an office all day, I want to go out and meet people" (Liese); "At school it was just why not be a nurse or work in an office and I could never do that" (Vivienne); "Nothing they say at school like teaching or office work or nursing ... it's all too routine" (Catherine); "They were all saying do office work at school but I had made a point of not doing office practise" (Sue); "It was all right for six weeks but I couldn't stay in dead end work like that (grocer's shop) for long" (Christine) and "I don't want any kind of dead end work - once you are qualified you can get on and do really well" (Beverley - beautician). What is being suggested at this point, then, is that the girl's choice of occupations, and the reasons they gave for naming these particular ones, could be understood to a large extent, though not completely * in terms of their wanting "a career" as opposed to dead end employment, as defined above, P.5.

And the third set of data to support the statement that their subjective careers were characterised by occupational centrality is that relating to their emphasis on educational routes. They believed, with varying degrees of optimism, that there were plenty of openings in the kinds of occupations they were naming - "There must be lots of jobs but how do you find out about them?" (Catherine); "There are so many jobs I don't know half of them" (Julie S.). . It was simply a question of working hard and finding them, which they were sure they could do - "I'm going to have to work hard but I can do it if I try" (Liese); "I don't feel anything is above me now, if anybody really wants they can get anything" (June); "If I put myself out I can do it" (Karen). And of course they were seeing college as the way to achieving their aims. - By "working hard", "putting themselves out" they were referring to their efforts to get more qualifications. And at the beginning most of them were emphasising those positive features of college life - and particularly the "freedom"

of college - which would result in their working hard. "You are treated more like adults here" (Irenia); "People come through choice and want to work" (Vivienne); "You get more work done here because they are not pushing you - you don't have to do things you don't want to do.... nobody messes you about" (Catherine); "It's up to you to make the effort" (Beverley); "It seems more adult - you want to work - everybody here wants to work because they came here by choice" (Liese). (Although alongside this there were also comments from a few girls expressing some doubts about college "I want to stick it but I don't know if I will" (Sue); "I won't go unless I get a job I would like the money" (Catherine); "I can't decide whether to go or stay - I'll probably end up staying" (Vivienne); and "I don't really know what to do, I doubt if I will stick the course" (Karen).) The significance of these last comments will be developed during the report. For the moment what is important is the strong commitment to educational routes being expressed by most of the girls at the start of the research, a commitment based, it seemed, on an awareness that without the qualifications they hoped to get at college the only employment available to them was "dead end" work with which they would get bored quickly - "I could only get a job in a shop without qualifications - I'd get sick of that after one year" (Karen).

It seemed clear, then, at this stage, that it was valid to conceptualise these girls' subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality. That although, certainly, there were differences within the group, the lack of evidence of domestic centrality, the type of employment they were aiming for, and the optimism founded in educational routes, all suggest this is a good starting point for the analysis. And it will now be suggested that any attempt to understand the form taken by these subjective careers, and their significance, needs to start, firstly, from the way in which they were a product of parental pressures and were constructed out of

pressures arising from some form of "adolescent subculture" to which these girls belonged, but that, secondly, what also seemed significant was the relationship between these subjective careers and the girls' objective careers, specifically the way in which their subjective careers showed little evidence of awareness or consideration of the objective constraints on them.

First, then, it will be argued that the ways in which their subjective careers were dominated by notions of occupational centrality need to be understood in the context of their parents' aspirations for them. All the girls' parents had high aspirations for them and - as will be developed later - had encouraged them to stay in education. And this was clear not only from their continual references to parents in their accounts, but also from their responses to a direct question "What do you think your parents would like you to be doing in ten years time?" In a few cases - Susanne, Vivienne, Karen - these high aspirations seem to be a case of high status professional parents (in these cases university lecturer, labour relations manager and industrial chemist) expecting similar achievements from their children. But, for the majority of the girls, parents, - often mothers - were seen as wanting more for their children than they had had and being able to offer only general support and pressure rather than specific advice. "I think they would like me to go to university, they want more for me than they had" (June); "They want me to do something that you train for and people respect you; Mum had brains but she went into service" (Irenia - Czechoslovak mother); "Mum only had education till she was fourteen, she wants my brother and me to do something better" (Elizabeth - Polish mother); "Mum wants me to travel around like her sister in Canada, do what she has not been able to; or anything as long as it is not an office or a shop" (Julie S.); and "Dad wouldn't have minded if I had got a job straight away, it's not so important for me to have a career as my brothers, but Mum is

* "Glamorous" and "glamorous career girl" (see over) are being used at this point in "common sense" ways. The meaning and significance of "glamour" for this work, and the way it relates to a "feminine" career, will be developed fully in Chapters 5 and 6.

much more modern" (Gillian). Only one girl, Sue, spoke of a totally uninterested attitude on the part of her parents "They don't mind as long as I don't just sit at home." And although direct contact with parents had not been part of the research outline, there seemed to be sufficient evidence from a variety of sources - teachers, careers officers and those parents who were spoken to during the process of interviewing the girls - to suggest that the girls were accurately reflecting their parent's perspective.

But whilst there were certainly very frequent references to their parents in their explanations of why they were seeing their lives developing in such a way, it seems that any explanation of their subjective careers needs to go beyond this and place the girls within a wider cultural - or subcultural - context. Clearly the teenage girl's adolescent subculture, as outlined in Chapter I, or certainly those elements of it which could be interpreted as directing girls towards a domestic future, would not seem to be relevant in the case of these girls, aiming, from their own accounts, for a totally nondomestic future. Furthermore, there were very few references in their accounts to friends who were working and earning money, or getting engaged - friends who might possibly have been a source of pressure towards domestic aims. Many of their friends were still at school and college; Christine mentioned one friend who was working in a big store and now wishing she had come to college; and Vivienne, who had worked for a year, had felt isolated because she was "much more intelligent" than the girls she was working with. But it does seem necessary to point out at this stage that the patterns and similarities in their accounts - the limited number of occupations they were naming, the specifically "feminine"* and possibly "glamorous"* characteristics of these occupations, and the reasons they were giving for naming them, their rejection of dead end occupations - suggest the significance of attempting to understand their subjective careers in terms of the influence of some form of adolescent subculture. But that the subculture in this case would be one which derived its

meanings partly from the more favoured position of these girls in terms of ability - they were better qualified than the majority of school leavers whilst still not having achieved that level of qualification which would channel them into the VIth form, A level and higher education route; partly from the socioeconomic status of their families, and the emphasis laid in the family and in the community on having a "career"; but which was also, to a large extent, with its emphasis on "glamour", media defined; defined very much in terms of those messages transmitted by some magazines, television programs, etc., which emphasise the "glamorous career girl" role of women.

Any explanation of these girls' subjective careers, then, must consider the significance of parental aspirations and the significance of the adolescent subculture from which they may have derived many of their meanings - neither of which would seem at this stage to constitute any kind of pressure towards a "domestic" career. But it will now be suggested that the most significant characteristic of these girls' subjective careers is the way in which the whole pattern of objective career constraints, as outlined at the start of this chapter, seems to have had little significance in the way they had been constructed. The "moving perspective" showed very little evidence of being related to, or based on, considerations of the structure of opportunities confronting the girls. And it will now be suggested that it is in attempting to understand this, and its implications - to understand the relationship between the objective and subjective careers of these girls - that it is possible to move towards an understanding of the routes the girls have taken at the start of the research.

Relationship between objective and subjective careers

It can be argued, that is, firstly, that the occupations the girls were naming at the start of the research as the ones they hoped to enter were ones which they might be expected, on the basis

of the objective career constraints outlined at the start of this chapter, to have difficulty entering. Some were "glamorous" occupations in highly competitive areas of employment in which there were few openings - courier, journalist on a wild life magazine, fashion photographer. Others were ones which demanded a fairly high level of entry qualification which, on the basis of their existing qualifications, it might be expected they would have difficulty entering - Irenia, for example, with four CSEs planning to enter higher education; Karen, with four O levels, talking of English Literature at university. And further evidence of the lack of consideration of objective constraint comes from their accounts of how they came to choose these particular occupations whilst at school, and from their accounts of how they would set about entering them. To take the former, the reasons they gave for naming these occupations contained very few references to the structure of opportunities - to what was open to them, accessible to them, on the basis of their qualifications and the local educational/occupational structure - and the way these might impose restrictions on them. Personal contact or experience figured largely in their accounts - Liese's father worked in newspaper printing and had arranged for her to visit the local printing works; Christine had had stays in hospital where she had become aware of the "jobs connected with medicine"; Susanne had helped nurse her grandmother, who had been a nurse; Julie's father worked at the airport; Gillian's mother had undergone physiotherapy. And also important was the school subjects they were good at - "I'm so athletic I have to have ten hours sport a week and the only way to get that is through a job in sport" (Irenia); Julie W. wanted to be a courier because she had a "gift for languages"; and Sue and Liese were aiming for journalism (and novelist as alternative in the case of Liese) because they were so good at English. Only in the case of Janet, deciding to aim to teach domestic science rather than art because there were more openings

in domestic science and expressing concern over the present lack of employment for teachers, was the structure of opportunities introduced into their accounts. And similarly, many of the girls were showing little understanding of the routes - the qualifications required, and the training routes - to enter the occupations they had named. Their optimism, as outlined above, was based very clearly on lack of consideration of the obstacles they might have to face before entering university or becoming accepted on training routes leading to these occupations. They were, quite simply, very vague about their future plans. And finally, not only were objective constraints not introduced into their accounts, but attempts to get some idea by direct questioning of the constraints on their careers - the way certain routes might be very difficult for them to enter - proved fruitless. Questions such as these - and more general questions with the same aim - asking them, for example, to suggest aspects of their education that they would have liked to have changed, or to suggest occupations which they thought it might be difficult for a girl to enter, proved meaningless.

To some extent, of course, in that these girls were not naming occupations demanding a scientific or technical background and qualifications, they were showing consideration of the objective constraints on them. Furthermore, of course, their aspirations were not totally unrealistic in that they did have higher qualifications than the majority of school leavers - they were over-qualified even at the start of the research for the kind of dead end employment they were rejecting; and, as has already been made clear, success in their college courses could certainly result in an opening up of routes for them. But, given the nature of their existing qualifications, and the structure of opportunities in education and employment, there did seem to be grounds for arguing that the majority of them - and there were exceptions such as Gillian, Anna and Janet - were

showing a pattern of unrealistic aspirations. And that not only their choice of occupations, but also their accounts of why they chose these, and their plans of how to enter them, were showing evidence of lack of consideration of the objective constraints on them.

How, then, is it possible to explain this? And to explain the differences between the girls in this respect? It will now be suggested that certainly one possibility is that the girls were simply unaware of, did not know about, the objective constraints on them - that it is a lack of knowledge of and understanding of opportunity structures which is the most significant part of any explanation: and that central to this must be the inadequacy of the careers advice and information the girls were receiving whilst at school. But questions of the girls lack of response to careers advice suggest this is not an adequate explanation. And it will be suggested that by focusing on the fact that these girls had not yet had to think seriously about what they really wanted to do, had not yet had to make definite occupational decisions - and therefore had not yet had to confront the constraints on them - a more satisfactory explanation of the lack of consideration of objective constraints in their accounts is achieved.

Lack of awareness of constraints - or lack of pressure to confront them?

A starting point for the first type of explanation, then, was the emergence, from the data of the first set of interviews, of a feeling on the part of all the girls that they had received little information or guidance from their schools in relation to occupational choice. (And although direct questions on careers advice had been included in the interview schedule, most of these comments had emerged without any direct questioning.) Thus, "I never talked to anyone at school till careers lessons in the VIth form - you were left to your own devices" (June); "I only saw the careers staff once, I couldn't attend the talks" (Karen). They were saying there was

little pressure on them, or encouragement, to go along and ask for advice. "In our last year we were given leaflets telling you about jobs but it all seemed so far away you looked at them in class and afterwards forgot about them" (Gillian); "There was a careers library but the teacher never helped you to go along there - people didn't talk about jobs as a lot were staying on for A level" (Irenia); "Last year at school the careers officer came once and said come and see me if you want to, but you had to go to her office" (Liese) and "There was a careers library but I couldn't understand it, and there was a bomb scare so I never got an interview" (Catherine). Several girls also saw careers work as being directed at only one group in the school, in which they were not included; those going to university in the case of Anna and Susanne, those entering employment immediately in the case of the secondary modern school girls. And finally, as they attempted to be more specific and develop their comments on the inadequate advice they had received, they were emphasising the way in which it had focused on a narrow range of jobs. "The careers teacher was the commerce teacher so she knew a lot about commercial jobs, the other jobs you had to find out for yourself and if you didn't feel like it, bad luck" (Janet) and "There was a careers teacher at school but she wasn't very helpful if you wanted to do something out of the ordinary or something she didn't know about" (Liese). And so whilst Gillian could say "You either had an idea of what you wanted to do without their telling you or you had no idea and would find out later without going and asking them", at the other extreme there was a demand for more help "There is nobody anywhere to tell you about anything - you just know about the basic jobs - there must be lots more but how do you find out about them?" (Catherine).

It seemed, then that the careers advice and information available for these girls was inadequate in several ways. And this picture was confirmed, to some extent, by the teachers from five of

the schools, an L.E.A. advisor, and an L.A. careers service representative. All the schools had someone responsible for careers work and had a "careers programme". Two of the schools, a girls grammar school and a mixed secondary modern school, had a clear structure of careers lessons, interviews, speakers, a careers library, and personal career notebooks. Two others, girls secondary moderns, were more limited, just fitting careers work into the "social studies" timetable, in addition to some individual interviews; and the fifth, a girls grammar school, admitted that it was very inadequate, with "very little happening", and the teacher responsible for careers work having only three free periods a week for the work. In addition, the L.E.A. advisor developed the argument that not many children got an effective careers programme, that careers work was undervalued in the borough, and that many schools had not got qualified careers teachers with sufficient time. And the careers service representative explained that they only saw those pupils who were referred, or referred themselves, and admitted that this kind of arrangement very often did not "throw up" the pupils who needed to be seen.

Schools in the area as a whole, then, were not offering a wide ranging comprehensive system of careers guidance. It was possible for some of the girls in this study to have had little contact with careers teachers, little careers information. And there are certainly grounds for arguing that the way in which the girls were seeing their lives developing in ways unrelated to the opportunities confronting them could be accounted for in terms of their being uninformed due to the lack of availability of advice and information.

But of course this type of explanation is not totally satisfactory; most significantly because although, certainly, careers work in the schools was limited and inadequate, it was available if needed. And it is this, the discrepancy between the accounts of those involved in careers work and the girls' emphatic denials of any help,

which suggests that what is as important as availability of help is the girls' "responsiveness" - or lack of "responsiveness" - to what was being offered. What is important is that the girls did not know of it, did not use it, or were rejecting it ; they were not trying to be helped. And it can be argued that whilst it is possible to explain this lack of responsiveness partly in terms of lack of relevance (that, given the girls' determination not to enter dead end occupations, it was the way in which opportunities were being represented to them, the way they were being channelled towards a limited range of dead end occupations in traditional areas of the occupational structure, which they were rejecting) this could only happen in a situation where they could afford to reject this channelling. It was clear from their accounts that they had not been searching for advice, that they felt that they did not need it yet, and could afford to reject what they had been told of limited opportunities. And in the concluding sections of this chapter it will be argued that it is the fact that these girls had not yet had to make definite occupational decisions - that there had been no pressure on them yet to think seriously and realistically about what they wanted to do - and consequently had not yet had to confront the objective constraints on them, which must be an important part of the explanation of their lack of consideration of objective constraints.

First, then, it can be suggested that their educational/occupational aims as stated at the start of the research were not definite ones. They had not, in fact, made definite decisions about what they wanted to do. As already mentioned, of course, three had said very clearly that they had no idea at all what to do after college. But of the others, it seemed that, although certainly they had named an occupation - or in some cases occupations - which they wished to enter, it can be suggested that they were not certain about these. That they either mentioned several other possibilities at the same

time - "I want to be a beautician but there is also working at the airport" (Catherine); or they said they had changed their minds very recently - in the case of June, for example, from nursing, to the Civil Service, to teaching, within six months; or they had added "but I don't really know" to their answers. And in this respect at least half the group could be considered not yet to have made definite occupational choices. And if, in addition to these, are counted those, like Christine and Julie W. who, whilst certainly answering questions about occupational choice in such a way as to indicate having made a definite choice, were nevertheless showing lack of knowledge of the occupations named, training and qualifications needed to enter them, and employment opportunities - who seemed to have made few plans of how to enter the occupations they had named - then it can be suggested that a majority of the girls had not yet really made definite occupational decisions. There were, it seemed at this stage, only three girls - Irenia, Gillian, Janet - and possibly two more - Liese and Anna - who could be considered to have made a definite occupational choice and to have made some plans of how to enter that occupation.

And secondly, moreover, and it is this which leads to a central part of the analysis, they had ^{not} enrolled in further education as part of a planned route towards a definite area of employment; their enrollment in further education can be understood very easily within the context of their not yet having made definite occupational decisions. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, most of the girls had several routes open to them at sixteen; continuing at school into the VIth form, transferring to the VIth form of another school, going directly into employment or enrolling at college. An important part of the girls' accounts of why they had come to college certainly was the need for qualifications - in terms of enrolling in further education rather than staying at school several mentioned the availability of subjects and courses at college, and in terms of

entering further education rather than employment directly there was again emphasis on further education as a way of gaining qualifications so they did not have to enter dead end jobs. But it was also very clear from their accounts that, in the case of the majority, the decision to apply to college was taken, very often, at the last moment, because none of the alternatives really appealed or because they could not decide what to do. "I was going to stay at school till the last day, when I thought I could never go back. I didn't fancy college either - I looked around for jobs but I didn't look hard because I didn't really want one" (Catherine); "I thought at first of getting a job - I didn't fancy the idea of college, but after three months of doing a part time job I was glad to get back to school work" (Christine); "I thought seriously about going as a trainee beautician, and about staying at school, but changed my mind" (Beverley); "After seeing the careers officer we decided journalism was no go so it was college or the army or the navy. I always said I would never go to college then Mum started going on, but this will shut them up for two years" (Sue); "I didn't really know what to do after hairdressing so we decided on college" (Vivienne). Only perhaps three of the girls (Liese, Anna and Irenia) had been planning for more than ten months to come to college. And only in the case of Irenia, Janet, Gillian, Anna and possibly Liese was the place of further education in their occupational plans - exactly what they hoped to achieve there and the next step after college - being clearly spelled out.

There was evidence, then, from the girls' accounts, that most of them had not yet made definite occupational decisions and had not actually confronted the objective constraints on them. This was made explicit in their accounts to some extent, but also could be deduced from, for example, their lack of knowledge of the occupations they were planning to enter, and the reasons they were

giving for enrolling at college. And it will now be suggested that this can be explained to a large extent in terms of a "lack of motivation" to make definite decisions. That it was clear from the girls' accounts that they were not worried or concerned about not being sure of what they wanted to do; that they felt that it was not time yet, or necessary yet, to make definite occupational decisions - "I'll start thinking towards the end of the second year" (Catherine); "There is always next year" (June). They were, to quote college staff, "living in a dream world", in which "Jobs and careers seem unreal to them". And, it will now be suggested, it is a lack of motivation which is largely a product of lack of pressures on them to make these decisions - to confront reality.

Most of the girls, that is, as already noted, had not been aware of any pressures on them from their schools to have clear occupational aims. "The school wasn't interested as long as you were going to do something" (Sue); "It was just exams at school, they didn't worry about afterwards" (Christine); "The school couldn't care less about me coming here" (Irenia); "They didn't bother much at school about what you were going to do, they just got rid of you as fast as they could" (Karen) and "School was just a place for your education, - you had to apply off your own bat - they were more worried about people going for jobs. If you were going to college you were O.K." (Janet). And, of course, with the parental pressure, already noted, towards **occupational achievement**, went lack of pressure to start work immediately, encouragement to stay in full time education, even without a specific aim at this stage. Only one girl, Christine, was saying at the start that her parents were anxious for her to decide on an occupation, the family often referring to her cousin who had "wasted her time" at college. For the rest, parents were simply encouraging them to stay in educational routes to get qualifications - "They said I should have qualifications because jobs were

scarce" (Karen); "Mum said it would be better if I had something behind me" (Elizabeth). Parents were not, that is, at this stage, asking what the qualifications were for. "This sort of area, it's sheltered, parents are willing to carry them as far as they want" (grammar school teacher). And finally of course, it had not been necessary to have a specific occupational aim when enrolling for their courses at college: "He just asked what subjects I wanted to do, went out and saw if it fitted, came back and said O.K." (Gillian). Enrollment on general GCE courses at that time, that is, (and changes were to take place the following year following a large amount of staff anxiety about the procedures) was not based on preparation for a specific area of employment. And it is this, it is suggested, the existence of general courses in further education on to which it was easy to gain admission without having a definite occupational aim, that is central to any understanding of the lack of pressure on the girls to think seriously about what they were going to do. Further education was a route, acknowledged and accepted by girls, schools and parents which allowed them to defer occupational decision making, which allowed them to continue without having to confront the objective constraints on them.

And it is further education's significance, as a route making possible this deferment, as well as a route making it possible for them to gain the qualifications to get a good job, as this was being defined by them at the start of the research, which forms a central part of this stage of the analysis. The dominance of these girls' occupational careers in their moving perspectives, the way in which they were holding on to notions of a "career", is due to the existence of further education; to the significance of further education not only as a route providing a means of overcoming the objective constraints directing them towards dead end employment but also, possibly more significantly, as a route allowing them to

continue without having to confront the objective constraints on them.

To conclude this chapter, then, it has been argued that it is analysis of the girls' objective and subjective careers, and the relationship between them, which provides a framework for understanding the routes taken by the girls at the start of the research. It has been argued that, objectively, it seemed that the girls' educational qualifications were such that many routes/courses/areas of employment had been closed to them; and that the structure and workings of the labour market imposed further constraints. But that the fact of their enrollment in further education made possible some modifications of these objective constraints, a widening of possible routes they could take. Subjectively, it has been suggested, the girls' careers were characterised by the centrality of an occupational career, involving nondomesticity, a rejection of dead end work, and a commitment to educational routes. And the main part of this chapter has been concerned with attempting to understand why their subjective careers took the form they did, and why they were paramount at the start of the research, the analysis centering on the significance of the role of further education not only in providing a route to more qualifications, but also a route which allowed for the deferment of occupational decision making.

Further education, that is, was a means of "articulating" the objective and subjective careers of these girls. Given the objective constraints on them, the only route allowing them to hold on to notions of "having a career" - of entering, and continuing in, employment with career prospects - was the further education route; it was the only way of resolving the lack of articulation that existed prior to the girls enrollment at college. And the extent to which it continued to provide a means of articulation, and the relevance of this for understanding the routes the girls took during the research, will form the major theme of the next two chapters.

Chapter 4. College and after: the extent to which further education continued to provide a satisfactory means of articulation of objective and subjective careers.

This chapter will start by summarising briefly the routes these girls took during the research - the stage of their departure from college and the subsequent employment/training/further or higher education routes they entered.

Five of the girls (Julie W., Catherine, Sue, Anna and Vivienne) left college during their first year without taking any examinations. (All except one had been on two year A level courses). Of these, Vivienne had had no occupational plans at the start, briefly considered occupational therapy and staying on to do A levels and left before Christmas to work full time at the hotel at which she was already working part time. Catherine had originally named beautician work but left after Christmas to enter the Civil Service as a clerical officer, a post which she had applied for, and forgotten about, the previous summer. Sue, naming journalism at the start, had enquired about a large number of jobs during her first term at college, mainly magazine and radio work but, acting on the suggestion of a friend, applied for and was appointed as receptionist/filing clerk in a transport company. Anna, aiming originally for a degree in nursing, had begun to think seriously about leaving before Easter, and found, from the job centre, a laboratory technicians job which she very soon left to work as a waitress. And Julie W., with courier as named occupational choice at the start, accepted the offer of a job at a local hairdressers when her Spanish classes were cancelled at the start of the year, returned to college soon after on an O level course, but left to work as dental receptionist and then soon after to assist in her father's newly acquired grocery/off licence.

Five of the girls (Christine, Julie S., Susanne, Beverley, Elizabeth) left college having completed a one year O level course

although four of them had intended to stay in education for A levels or professional training. Of these, Susanne was still considering catering or nursing during her first two terms, then medical-secretarial work, but left college to work full time as nursing assistant in the nursing home in which she had been working part time. Elizabeth, during her first year, considered banking, A levels followed by university and a "medical kind of profession", and left college, still not having decided what she wanted to do, to work as clerk in a stockbroker's office. Christine had originally planned to enter a training course to be a pharmacy technician, had widened this to "just something in a lab. to do with medicine", applied for a job as trainee dispenser at Boots but was taken on as general assistant until an opening should arise. Julie S. had had no plans at the start, considered dental technician work, left college without a job, and was trying for the Civil Service, other clerical work, and lab. work. And Beverley, who also had planned to train as a beautician, became less interested in it, left college without a job, and then obtained temporary work as a ground hostess at the airport.

Six of the girls (Liese, Karen, June, Gillian, Janet, Irenia) left having completed an A level course - after two years at college for four of them, three years for Irenia. Of these, Karen had been very uncertain about occupational choice, considering and eventually applying for university, was rejected by her five choices, applied to polytechnic but failed her A levels, and transferred to another college of further education to retake them. Liese had been aiming for journalism at the start, had become interested in "something to do with sociology", possibly "social services abroad", had applied to W.R.N.S. but found she could not train for social work in the navy, applied to university and was accepted by Lancaster on two C's for a social administration degree; but failed her A levels and was continuing to work in the "filling in" job she had obtained as sales

representative in an insulation company. June had been considering teaching at the start, during her second year she had considered university and training for speech or occupational therapy, applied for and was accepted for nursing training but passed her two A levels and so applied and was accepted at Manchester Polytechnic to read for a B.A. Social Studies. Janet had maintained her original aim of entering higher education to train to teach domestic science (although she also considered during her time at college studying for a diploma in Home Economics); was accepted at her first choice of college on two E's, and having gained these enrolled for a B.Sc. (Ord.) in Home Economics leading eventually to qualified teacher status or a career in industry. Gillian began during her first year to question her original aim of training for physiotherapy, but applied for training whilst looking at alternatives, being accepted for chiropody training and some nursing training. She did finally get a late offer to train for physiotherapy but decided to accept the offer of a place to train for S.R.N. and sick children's nurse combined. And Irenia stayed at college for three years to gain the necessary O and A level qualifications to train as a P.E. teacher. She considered very briefly the alternatives of entering the army or working at a leisure centre but was accepted at Birmingham College of Higher Education.

To summarise the above very briefly then: first, all these girls had entered, or were training to enter, employment which was firmly situated in the female sector of the labour force - either in the professional areas of teaching or nursing, or, in the majority of cases, in the low status, low paid, dead end (i.e. with no training or promotion prospects) areas of employment in which women predominate and which they predominantly enter; and secondly, most of the girls left college earlier than they had originally intended - they did not complete their courses or left without continuing in the way they had expected - and "early" departure lead in every

case to dead end jobs; whilst of those who remained to complete their college course all but one moved on to further training or education.

It seems clear, then, that these two "findings" yield several related and interdependent questions.

1) Why did all the girls enter female areas of employment and the majority of them enter dead end female areas of employment?

2) What is the precise nature of the relationship between "early" departure from college and subsequent entry into dead end work?

3) How is it possible to account for the different stages at which girls left educational routes and what distinguishes those who left "early" from those who continued in education/training, moving further towards professional areas of work?

And in this report, working within the conceptual framework of objective and subjective careers as outlined in Chapter I, an attempt will be made to answer these questions. It will be suggested, first of all, that entry into female areas of employment can be accounted for to a large extent in terms of the girls' experiences before the start of the study; and that what, possibly, is of more immediate interest in this work is why the majority entered female dead end jobs, in contrast to their aspirations at the start and in contrast to the routes taken by those few who entered higher education or further training. And it will be suggested that the most useful starting point for explaining this must be the failure of these girls to increase the range or level of their qualifications, a failure which is best understood in terms of a process of "opting out" of college. The main part of this chapter, then, will be concerned with attempting to understand this "opting out" in terms of the extent to which further education continued to provide a satisfactory means of articulation of their objective and subjective careers. Starting from the position that one of the most important themes to emerge from the girls' accounts during the period at college was their

increasing consideration of the objective constraints confronting them, it will be shown that, although there seemed to be evidence that the girls' subjective careers continued to be characterised by occupational centrality, it was possible only to a very limited extent to understand the routes they took in terms of attempts to maintain the paramountcy of their subjective careers, conceptualised in this way. And the chapter will conclude by suggesting that it is only by questioning the validity of continuing to conceptualise the girls' subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality - a questioning resulting from focusing on the lack of decisiveness in their accounts - and by recognising the differences that existed between the girls, subjectively, that it is possible to start to move towards a fuller understanding of the routes they took.

Failure to overcome obstacles within the parameters set by structural constraints

It seems clear, first of all, that the first characteristic of the routes they have taken - their entry into female areas of employment - is to be explained primarily in terms of their experiences before the research started. These girls did not want to, and were not able to, enter areas of employment outside the female sector. Questions of why they did not want to involve consideration of all those elements outlined in Chapter I as being of significance in the development of femininity - the influence of the family, the media, adolescent culture and the "hidden curriculum" of the school - which are only reinforced by their experience of college. Only in the context of very dramatic changes during the period at college - in teacher expectations, or in careers advice, for example - would it have been possible to expect some undermining of these influences; and there is no evidence at all in the girls' accounts of this happening. Questions of why they were not able to enter non-female areas of employment involves consideration not only of the character-

istics and workings of the labour market, as outlined in Chapter 1, but also of the nature of their educational qualifications. To the extent that these girls had no experience of, nor qualifications in, scientific or technical subjects at school, and to the extent that they had enrolled almost completely (there is one exception) on arts based courses at college - whatever their level - then not only did they not want to, not consider non female areas of employment, they did not have access to them. And any discussion of these girls' careers must give a central place to these "structural" constraints - stemming from the relationship between their educational qualifications and the characteristics of the occupational structure - which set very clear limits on what they could do; which set the parameters within which all routes must be taken.

But it was also suggested in Chapter 3 that any discussion of the objective constraints on these girls' careers - the limitations on what they could do that was a product of their educational qualifications and the structure/characteristics of post secondary education and the occupational structure - needed to distinguish between those "structural" constraints outlined above and the series of "obstacles" which were to be overcome within these objective parameters; that many routes were closed to the girls from the start, but some routes were still open if they could gain the necessary qualifications and find the openings. And that although it was certainly possible to outline the kind of routes that could be opening up for these girls as a consequence of the courses they were enrolling for at college - higher education and a range of training schemes for those on A level courses, and higher levels of employment as well as a wider variety of employment for all of them - it was not clear at the start just how, and to what extent, the girls would succeed in gaining access to them. And of course it is this second type of constraint - the "obstacles" - which set the context for any discussion

of the girls' entry into dead end employment as outlined above. Most of the girls did not overcome the obstacles. College did not result in a great opening up of routes, even within the parameters set by the structural constraints. And a large part of this report will be concerned with why this did not happen, with why most of the girls entered dead end work, and with attempting to understand what distinguished them from those who were more successful in overcoming the obstacles to a "career", who entered training for employment with career prospects.

College did not, then, for most of them, result in a great opening up of routes and opportunities. Objectively, their careers continued to be severely constrained. And whilst certainly there is some evidence of the girls having to confront direct constraints in the form of no openings in the fields they wanted to enter, of their being refused access to areas for which they were (or were potentially) qualified - Gillian, for example, was turned down by her first four choices of physiotherapy college; Karen was rejected by all five universities she applied to through U.C.C.A., and Elizabeth was told there were no openings in banks due to competition - this approach is not of central importance here. Clearly, of central significance to any discussion of girls' entry into employment must be, as already outlined, the characteristics of the labour market, traditional labour market assumptions. But in the case of this particular group of girls, it is failure to increase the range and level of their qualifications whilst at college which is the most immediate and obvious factor in explaining their finding themselves consigned to dead end jobs. It is the way in which the majority of the girls did not overcome these obstacles, did not actually reach the point of applying for other than dead end jobs, because of their lack of qualifications, which must be the starting point for any analysis of the routes they took, and for understanding the differences between those who entered dead

end work and those who moved further along the road to a "career". It is whether or not they overcame specific obstacles, that is, which provides a means of differentiating between girls all of whom were experiencing similar labour market constraints.

To start with, of course, as has already been outlined, they did not overcome their lack of scientific/technical background or qualifications - this has been shown to be obvious from the start in that the courses they had enrolled for had been predominantly arts courses with some biology (with the exception of course of Anna taking three science A levels). But nor did they increase the general level and range of their qualifications to any great extent. They certainly did not gain the necessary qualifications to enable them to enter the type of occupations they had named at the start. Five left without taking any examinations; others gained only a few extra O levels, not sufficient to open up any new routes to them, and did not continue on to A levels or training of any sort; and two failed their A levels completely. Only Elizabeth, with five extra O levels, and June, Janet, Gillian and Irenia, actually passed most of the subjects they had enrolled for thereby, for the latter four, opening up higher education or training courses. (In this respect Elizabeth's success was fairly irrelevant in that she had not changed the level of her qualifications).

Given, then, that most of the girls did not overcome the limitations of their qualifications, that they left college with the same kind of qualifications as when they had started, whilst a very small number did attain the qualifications to open up routes for them, it is clear that by the end of the research period the girls were very differently located in relation to objective career constraints on them. And that, given that few openings other than

shopwork and clerical work existed for those with only a few O levels in non-scientific or non-technical subjects - that opportunities for those completing one year O level courses, were still similar to those of sixteen year old school leavers - then the main areas of employment open to most of these girls on leaving college were those dead end ones they had rejected from the start. (Although there did exist, of course, the possibility of advancement through internal promotion or gaining qualifications at evening class). And they are thus clearly to be distinguished from those who gained sufficient qualifications to be able to go on to higher education or training.

Why then did many of the girls leave college having gained only a few extra - if any - qualifications? And what distinguishes them from those who remained, to go a long way towards overcoming the obstacles in their path to a "career"?

Any attempt to explain this, it will now be argued, must start from the significance of the girls choosing to leave college "early", i.e. before the completion of one year, or without continuing on to further courses as intended. These girls did not have to leave; there were still educational routes open to all of them (with the possible but not complete exception of Liese) at the time of their departure. College - and other educational routes - was still available as a means of articulation of their objective and subjective careers. And it is this early departure which provides a large part of the explanation of why they did not gain many extra qualifications: they simply did not give themselves the chance to, they did not sit the necessary examinations. And furthermore, the significance of their "choosing" to leave is reinforced by the evidence that, to some extent, even whilst remaining at college, they were "choosing"

not to work for their examinations. That whilst, certainly, questions of their ability to pass the examinations are important (some girls, clearly, were starting their courses with a lot of work to put in, in a short period, and were finding the work difficult, in contrast to those few who started with four or five O levels and were having few academic difficulties) yet still it is possible to understand failure at those exams they did take in terms partly of their not being prepared to put in sufficient work to pass, in the context of comments such as "I just can't be bothered any more" and "I've just lost interest in it". The clearest understanding of their failure to get the qualifications they had set out for, then - of why they did not increase the range and scope of their qualifications, and of the differences within the group in this respect - is achieved in terms of their "opting out" of education. The majority, either through opting out physically - leaving college early - or by not being prepared to work, did not try very hard to get their qualifications. They have failed, largely, it will be argued in this report, to the extent that they have defined college, and work at college, as a "waste of time"; to the extent that they have become "disenchanted" with educational routes.

What, then, is developing as a major question of the research is why did most of the girls "opt out"? What was happening during the period they were at college to make most of them give up - either by leaving or by losing interest in their courses - before gaining any extra qualifications? And what can account for the different stages, and extent, to which they were opting out, if at all? That is, why, to work within the framework developed in the previous chapter, although college was still accessible to them as a means of articulation of their objective and subjective careers, were they finding it no longer acceptable or satisfactory? And to what extent is it

possible to understand what was happening in terms of changes and modifications taking place in the girls' objective and subjective careers, changes which had implications for the extent to which further education continued to be a satisfactory means of articulation?

Increasing consideration of objective constraints

It will be argued first of all, in this chapter, that any attempt to understand what happened during their time at college to result in its being no longer a satisfactory form of articulation must start from the girls' increasing consideration of the objective constraints on their careers. That just as one of the major themes to emerge from analysis of the first set of interviews was their lack of consideration of these constraints, so one of the major themes to emerge from analysis of the main set of interviews was the change that had taken place in this respect. Questions of how long and difficult it was going to be to attain the type of occupation they had named were now dominating the girls' accounts, were a predominant part of the explanations of why they were leaving college. And, just as in Chapter 3 lack of consideration of objective constraints was explained in terms of their not yet having had to confront them, so it will be suggested in this chapter that it is the increasing pressure on them to make definite occupational decisions, and thereby confront these constraints, which is of central significance.

First, then, it will be suggested that although, certainly, objective constraints as such were not directly closing routes to these girls; although few girls in this study had had routes directly barred to them through there being no openings in certain areas; although failure to gain extra qualifications needed to be understood primarily in the context of an "opting out" of education, rather than in terms of lack of ability or lack of access to continuing educational routes - yet, still, the girls' position in relation to

objective constraints is a very important starting point for any analysis of the routes they were taking. Some of the most important sets of data arising from the research concern the objective constraints on the girls; the limitations on what they could do that were a product of their educational qualifications and their relationship to the occupational structure. But, as this study will show, their significance lies not in the way they were directly limiting what the girls could do but in the girls' increasing awareness and evaluation of them. It is this, it will be argued, and the consequent calculation of costs and benefits involved in staying in educational routes, in relation to a central life interest, that provides a starting point for explanations of why most were leaving educational routes.

During the period of the research, then, all the girls were becoming much more aware of the limits imposed by their educational qualifications, their ability to gain more qualifications, and the shortage of openings in many areas of employment and further/higher education. Their former optimism, the belief that even if they had not yet decided on a "career" they would be able to find one, was being replaced by a much greater awareness of the difficulties of finding employment which they were qualified for, in which there were openings, and which was not the careerless employment they had rejected from the start.

On the one hand, firstly, there were increasing references in their accounts to the limitations imposed by their qualifications, and their ability to gain the qualifications they needed. There was a realisation that many routes were in fact closed to them because of their limited experience of science subjects. Elizabeth, for example, was having to rule out a number of "medical" occupations that appealed

to her because she would have had to spend another three years at college doing science subjects—"at school I didn't know I needed sciences - I've suddenly realised all I should have done"; and this also applied to June, who had considered doing physiotherapy¹ and occupational therapy, but had no O level maths or science; and Julie S., who was realising she might not have the right qualifications for dental work. There was also a realisation of how too few qualifications would in fact make it difficult to enter existing choices. Beverley, for example, was becoming uncertain of being accepted to train as a beautician because she definitely needed her O levels - "I had been hoping they might be more lenient"; and Christine was finding training as a pharmacy technician increasingly inaccessible - she needed four O levels before she was eighteen "and the more qualifications I take, by the time I get them they will have gone up". And finally several of the girls were becoming concerned about their own ability to cope with the subjects they were studying; Anna, for example, was doubting whether she would pass her A levels with high enough grades for university—"I've been starting to realise how hard it is to get in"; and Sue, June, Christine and Susanne were all finding parts of their college courses difficult to understand. Limited qualifications, then - either in the sense of starting with a disadvantage, i.e. too much to catch up, or in the sense of their being afraid they would not achieve the qualifications they had hoped for - were becoming a significant part of their accounts during the research. They were becoming aware that they would not have the qualifications to enter the type of employment/training they had hoped for at the start of the research; and that they were qualified for very little else that appealed. The following comment, from Janet, probably sums up the situation for many of the girls, (and also serves to introduce the following section). Afraid she might

not get her A levels, looking around to see what else she could do, she commented "There were clerks, lab. assistants, shop assistants most of them were office jobs and sometimes I thought I had taken the wrong subjects, there were so many secretarial, and sometimes I wondered what I had stayed at college for."

And this, then, leads to the second important characteristic of their accounts during the research; the increasing awareness of the shortage of openings in employment or further/higher education; the difficulty of entering the areas of employment they had considered even if they should gain the necessary qualifications. It has already been pointed out that only in a few cases is it possible to talk of girls not finding openings in areas of employment/training for which they applied. But what does emerge as significant from their accounts is the girls' realisation that it was going to be difficult to find openings, long before they had to apply for entry. Thus, "Mum said I might go through all this and come out at the end and not be able to get a job at all all the things I want to do are getting hard to get into" (Catherine); "Lots of girls want to do it and I keep thinking they might have O levels already" (Beverley); "It might be easier to get into S.E.N. rather than S.R.N., there is less competition" (Susanne); and "There are vacancies for pharmacy technicians in all the papers but they all want experience and training - even people with A levels can't get on to the Boots pharmacy course" (Christine).

What has been suggested so far, then, is that during the period of the research the girls were becoming aware of the objective constraints on them - these constraints were becoming more visible. And although there were certainly clear differences within the group in terms of the extent of these limits on what they could do (the constraints on Janet, for example, starting with five O levels and aiming to enter an area in which vacancies would exist if she gained her two A levels being far fewer than those on, for example, Christine,

starting with few qualifications, aiming to enter a heavily over-subscribed area, and also racing against the clock in her efforts to gain entry qualifications) yet still it is clear that there was an increasing awareness on all their parts of the extent to which the routes they could take were limited by their educational qualifications and the structure of openings in education and employment.

How, then, is this very significant change in their accounts to be understood? It was suggested in Chapter 3 that the lack of consideration of objective career constraints in their accounts might possibly be explained in terms of lack of knowledge and information - that they simply did not know, were unaware of the "structure of opportunities" confronting them - and that this was partly to be understood in terms of the inadequate careers advice and information they had received; but that questions of the "responsiveness" of the girls to official institutions of careers advice and guidance suggested this was not satisfactory as an explanation and that it was the fact that these girls had not yet had to make definite occupational choices - and consequently had not had to confront the objective constraints on them - which was the main reason for the lack of consideration of these constraints in their accounts. And it will now be suggested that the increasing consideration of objective constraints in their accounts can be understood within the same type of framework: that they were now better informed - certainly in a negative sense in that they were aware of problems of access to many routes and to some extent in a more positive sense in that there was some widening of the range of employment routes they were considering; that official institutions of careers advice and information play a significant part in this increasing awareness; but that it is the contrast between the situation at the start of the research, when there was no pressure on them to make occupational decisions, and the situation as the research progressed when they were having to confront the constraints,

which is the most important factor explaining the changes in their accounts.

First, then, it is clear that official institutions of careers advice and information played an important part in the girls' increasing awareness of the constraints on them. But their significance lay largely in the way they were considered irrelevant by the majority of the girls in helping them to cope with the realisation of how difficult it was going to be to attain the type of occupation they had named at the start. Careers officers and careers teachers were not, it seemed, helping them to increase their knowledge of what opportunities were still open to them, they were not helping them to find any relevant routes that might still exist. They were irrelevant in that, first of all, although advice and information was available (the system at college was that tutors were responsible for their tutorial groups in all matters including occupational planning but they could refer to, or be referred to the college careers officer or L.A. careers service for specialist help) there was little mention of help from any official source in the girls' accounts (apart from answers to direct questions). Informal sources of advice and informal channels - friends, relatives, as well as newspaper situations vacant columns and the job centre - were cited much more frequently. And when they were asked directly how they had been helped by careers officers and careers teachers, very similar points were developed as those in Chapter 3 in relation to careers work whilst at school. That is, whilst they knew that careers advice and information had been available they had not used it; either by not making contact with careers teachers or careers officers - "It's up to you to go to the careers officer - I haven't had time" (Irenia); "What I found out I did myself - nobody really helped me" (Liese); "I've done all the finding out myself - I didn't ask for anything from college - I had it all worked out myself" (Sue); "I don't know much more than I did

last year and I did that myself" (Julie S.); or because they had found that what they were offering was of little use, was irrelevant. That is, that careers officers had not been able to suggest any new, alternative routes that were acceptable and feasible; they had not helped them to find jobs which they wanted and which they were qualified for. "When I asked about lab. jobs she said there was nothing at the moment, you keep your eyes open she might at least have mentioned other jobs" (Anna); "If she had said, right, here are the things you can do with your qualifications, but all she said was, what do you want to do?..... if she had had a leaflet with all the things I could have gone into I might have said yes, I wouldn't mind doing that" (Elizabeth); or "It's a slow process whereby nobody tells you about the jobs you are not likely to get into, so you may actually be missing some and not be aware of it" (Gillian): And finally, whilst the comments of the college staff were from a different perspective - "They never come to tutorials, you make suggestions but they won't listen; they don't seem to need advice"; "If it is something contrary to what they want they won't listen"; "They are saying what you are offering is not what I want to do" - their comments were further grounds for arguing that the work of those involved in careers advice and information was proving irrelevant to these girls.

So far, then, it has been argued that one of the most significant sets of data arising from the research was the evidence that the girls were becoming increasingly aware of the constraints on them - constraints arising predominantly from their limited educational qualifications and the limited number and type of openings available. And that it is necessary to consider in this context the way in which official institutions of careers advice were proving irrelevant in terms of helping the girls to confront these constraints.

But of course they had only become aware of the constraints

to the extent that they had tried to make definite occupational decisions. And it will be argued finally in this section that, it was the expectation once at college that they would decide definitely what they wanted to do; the pressures - and the variations in these pressures within the group - to make definite decisions, which must form a central part of any explanation of their increasing consideration of the constraints on them. That the contrast between their lack of consideration of objective constraints at the start of the research and the way in which these started to dominate their accounts during the research can be understood to a large extent in the context of the girls having to think seriously, for the first time, about what they really wanted to do; and that it is in doing this that they were discovering the limitations on them.

Once at college, that is, the situation was being defined by all - college staff, parents and girls - as one in which they should now be making definite occupational decisions. College tutors were asking about occupational plans with reference to enrollments for the following year, applications for training courses and for higher education. From the girls' accounts, parents were now expecting a more "positive" search for an occupation: they were anxious for them to make definite choices and were not willing to let them continue indefinitely - "My parents are telling me to go out and find a job" (Beverley); "My parents are beginning to ask if I know what I want to do" (June). And the girls themselves, in contrast to the first set of interviews when they saw no great urgency to make decisions, were now expressing worry and guilt because they did not know what to do. The notion that it was undesirable not to have definite plans had become an important part of their accounts; although, as will be developed later, there was an element of ambivalence here in that there was also some resentment at this pressure, there was still a feeling that they should be able to take their time and not be rushed into a

decision. And of course the general expectation that they now would make definite plans needs to be understood in the context of there being no further way for most of them of deferring occupational choice. There existed no easily accessible general educational route - of the type which further education had provided at the start of the research - for most of them after finishing their courses. Even the deferment of decision making by opting to continue on to A level courses was no longer possible; a change in college policy meant that they would no longer be able to enrol for A levels without a specific occupation in mind - "They will no longer be allowed to get qualifications which will be of no use to them" (careers officer). And the cut back in teacher training and attendant rise in entry qualifications to higher education to two A levels had made it very difficult to enter one formerly significant route. The only ones, then, who did have another route allowing deferment open to them after their present course were those who, depending on parental support and financial aid, were able to stay in further education (in the same college or at another) and those who gained two A levels and thereby entry into higher education.

To that extent, then, it is clear that within the general pattern of all the girls being aware of pressures to make occupational decisions, there were differences within the group in terms of the extent to which education still existed as a route allowing them to defer making definite occupational choices; in terms of the stage at which they had to make decisions and thereby confront the constraints on them. And these differences depended on the length of course they had enrolled for, the extent to which they were able to move on to the next stage of education, and the degree to which parents were willing to let them continue in education without a definite occupational aim. There were differences between those on one year O level courses who were not being allowed to continue to A levels without

basing their choice of subjects on a specific occupational aim, and those on two year courses who did not have the same pressures on them early in the research. There were differences between those for whom no further general education route existed, and those for whom higher education - on non vocational courses - was possibly accessible. And there were differences between those with supportive parents, willing to let them continue, and others who were facing not only parental pressure but also pressure from friends and relatives.

Very generally, then, a pattern was emerging during the research of girls now having to confront occupational decision making but finding that they had very limited qualifications, that there were few openings in the fields that they wanted to enter, and that they were not able to find alternatives. But within this general pattern there were clearly differences within the group depending on how great the limitations were, and what pressure there was on them to make decisions.

What has been argued so far in this chapter, then, is that attempting to understand the girls' routes in terms only of direct constraints does not provide a very satisfactory explanation of these routes. That what is clearly the most significant constraint on these girls, objectively, is their failure to gain many additional qualifications whilst at college; and that this failure can only be understood in terms of an opting out, or turning away from, educational routes. It has been suggested that it is understanding this which must be one of the main aims of the research; and that a clear starting point for the analysis - the most significant set of data to emerge from analysis of the girls' interviews during the fieldwork - is the girls' increasing consideration of the objective constraints on them.

What, then, is the significance of this for understanding

the process of opting out of educational routes? To what extent is it possible to argue that the girls' turning away from the attempt to gain more qualifications can be understood in the context of their increasing consideration of the objective constraints on them?

Subjective careers: the continuing centrality of occupational careers

Clearly any answer to these questions must involve consideration of the girls' subjective careers, in that consideration of objective constraints only takes on meaning in the light of the way they are interpreted according to a "central life interest". And the remainder of this chapter will consist of an attempt to locate the girls' routes within a framework based on the interrelationship between increasing consideration of constraints and a moving perspective conceptualised in terms of occupational centrality as outlined as characterising these girls at the start of the research. It will be suggested that it still seemed that, subjectively, the main constraint on these girls was that they wanted a "career"; and that to some extent it is possible to understand the routes they took during the research, and the differences between the girls, in terms of attempts to maintain the paramountcy of their subjective careers, defined in this way, in the face of increasing awareness of the objective constraints on them. That they were staying in, or leaving, further education to the extent that it was still providing a means of articulation for them. But the chapter will conclude by suggesting that this approach is not in fact adequate, and that it also seems necessary to consider changes taking place in the girls' subjective careers during their time at college, changes which seem to indicate for most of them some form of displacement of their occupational careers.

First, then, there was evidence to suggest that their occupational careers were still central during much of the research period - that there had been little change during the research in many of those aspects of their subjective careers outlined in Chapter 3.

Thus, there was still little evidence to give grounds for arguing that there was a move towards domestic centrality. There were still few references to early marriage, early economic dependence, fitting work around children. The moving perspective in this respect was still clearly centred on their occupational careers. The one exception here was Julie S. who was talking of getting engaged on her nineteenth birthday. And particularly significant in this respect were their comments on, their responses to, pressures to make decisions. "I'm scared of going into something I just can't get out of, so I will be stuck with it for the rest of my life" (Vivienne); "I want to take my time to choose, why should they rush me, I'm stuck with it for the rest of my days how can I decide now what I'm going to do for the rest of my life?" (June); "You can't make up your mind in two or three weeks when you will have it for the rest of your life" (Elizabeth). The question of occupational choice, that is, was very important and not to be rushed.

And there were still many references to their determination not to enter, to their continued antagonism to, clerical or shopwork or other routine "Boring" occupations. There was still little evidence of a turning towards dead end work before they left college- "I don't want to work in a factory or shop, I'm not that desperate that I will take anything" (Sue); "I would get bored with any job I would get with just O levels" (Anna); "I've been wondering about going full time catering but I would soon get bored" (Vivienne); "I won't settle for anything less (than pharmacy training)" (Christine); "I might as well study for a few years as go in for a job I will soon get fed up with" (Karen); "I don't want something ordinary I couldn't do a dead end job" (Liese). And, most significantly, this antagonism towards dead end work continued even in the case of those who had left college to enter precisely that kind of work. By defining the routes they had taken either in terms of their temporary nature,

planning to return to further education after one year or simply to "move on" - "So, I've got a job in an office I really had expected something careerwise but I'm not stuck with it for the rest of my life" (Elizabeth); or by defining them in terms of their qualities as stepping stones to the kind of occupation they had first aimed for - Julie W., for example, claiming that hairdressing, dental receptionist work, and employment in her father's shop would all enable her to get to Spain to be a courier, Sue hoping that office experience would enable her to get into journalism, and Christine working as a shop assistant in Boots with the hope of being taken as a trainee dispenser in a new branch; or by defining them in terms of the possibilities of internal promotion (Vivienne, Liese) or by working at night school to get more qualifications (Elizabeth) they were holding on to notions of "having a career". It is only in the case of those who have been in employment for some time that there can be said to be any evidence of acceptance of their position in dead end work of some kind of change in their subjective careers: - "I'd said all along that I didn't want to work in an office but that's how it goes - it's a job and if I get bored I'm getting paid for it" (Sue); and "The trouble with this kind of job, you get used to it and the money and forget all about your plans" (Catherine).

To some extent, then, it certainly seemed to be the case that the girls' subjective careers could continue to be conceptualised in terms of occupational centrality. That an important subjective constraint on these girls was that the moving perspective continued to be dominated by notions of "having a career". And that if any displacement of their occupational careers occurred it was after they had been in employment for some time. To what extent, then, is it possible to understand the routes these girls took in terms of the interrelationship between a central life interest conceptualised in this way, and increasing awareness of the constraints on them, as

outlined in the first half of this chapter?

It was suggested at the end of Chapter 3 that entry into further education could be understood partly in terms of further education's significance as a route making it possible to overcome obstacles on the way to a "career" and partly in terms of its significance as a route allowing deferment of occupational decision making; it was a means of articulating the girls' objective and subjective careers. And to some limited extent it does seem possible to understand the routes they took during the research within the same kind of framework. Certainly, given the girls' increasing realisation of how difficult it was going to be to attain the type of occupation named at the start, and the increasing pressure on them to make occupational decisions, it might be argued that further education was no longer, for many, providing a means of articulation. And it is possible, to a very limited extent, to understand the routes they took during the research in terms of continued efforts to maintain the paramountcy of their subjective careers, to hold on to notions of "having a career" in this situation. Certainly, it is important to bring into any explanation the way in which the stage at which each girl left educational routes reflected to some extent her location in relation to the constraints outlined in the first half of this chapter. As already shown, college was more likely for some than for others to enable them to achieve their goal. It was less likely to seem a waste of time for, e.g. Janet or Gillian, starting off with five O levels and aiming for relatively accessible areas of employment, than for, e.g. Christine or Sue, starting with very limited qualifications and aiming to enter areas of employment which were less accessible. Similarly, the extent to which college remained a means of deferring occupational decision making, the extent to which, particularly for those on one year O level courses, decisions were being demanded of them, must enter into any explanation of the differences in the routes taken by,

e.g. Elizabeth and June. And clearly it is necessary to consider the way in which the girls themselves were defining the routes they were taking in terms of their significance as alternative means of articulation; in terms of their significance as "third choices" - night school, internal promotion, stepping stones, useful experience, and in terms of their significance as continued means of deferment.

There does seem to be evidence to suggest, then, that it might be possible to understand the routes these girls took in terms of the extent to which further education continued to be a satisfactory means of articulation, given a central life interest of "having a career". That to the extent that it seemed likely to make it possible for them to hold on to notions of "having a career", they were staying at college; to the extent that it did not seem likely, college was being defined as a waste of time and they were looking for alternative routes.

But, of course, in many ways this framework is not adequate. Attempting to understand the girls' routes in terms of continued efforts to maintain the paramountcy of their subjective careers defined in this way is only partially satisfactory. Firstly, it does not account for all the differences between the girls. It is clearly not possible to understand the different stages at which the girls left educational routes - after two months, after one year, after two years - and their subsequent routes, only in terms of their different position in relation to the objective constraints on them. It may be possible to account for the different routes taken by e.g. Christine and Gillian, within this kind of framework; but what of the differences between the routes taken by e.g. Anna, with nine O levels, studying three science A levels who would have seemed to have had a good chance of achieving entry into the type of occupation she was aiming for; and Irenia, starting with four CSE's, hoping for a place in higher education, for whom, it seemed, college was far less

likely to enable her to achieve her aims. How is it possible to explain the distinction between the majority of girls, leaving college when confronted with the limitations on them, and others - Janet, Irenia, Gillian, Karen - who, when confronted with the same or very similar types of objective constraints nevertheless continued in educational routes, attempting to overcome the constraints in this way: "I'm a bit put off because it is a long way to go - two more years here, and three at college, but I realise I'm going to have to do it" (Irenia); "I've just been to the careers officer because a friend who applied was rejected on C grade O levels so I've written off to ask if I should retake some" (Gillian)? And secondly, whilst certainly the girls themselves were defining the routes they were taking, to a large extent, as "third chances", these routes were very different from the further education "second chance route", which was an accepted, feasible route to gaining entry to a "career." Whilst, certainly, night school, office experience, working one's way up, are all possible routes to a "career", the problems of returning to education after a time away, the difficulties of achieving qualifications through part time study, and the acknowledged significance of first level of employment for subsequent positions in the occupational structure, make these routes much more unrealistic than the further education college route. This kind of approach, that is, raises the question of why, if it was still valid to conceptualise these girls' subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality, some were leaving college when they did not have to, and when it was still the most certain way of achieving entry into the type of employment they had named at the start.

To conclude this section, then, it seems that any attempt to understand the routes these girls took (and specifically the "early" departure of the majority from educational routes) in terms of the interrelationship between increasing awareness of objective

constraints, as outlined in the first half of this chapter, and a central life interest as it has been understood so far, is inadequate. And it will be argued, in the following section and in the rest of this report, that any attempt to understand why the girls left college, and the differences between the girls in this respect, can only be understood by a reformulation of the analysis of their subjective careers; a reformulation which demonstrates the complexity of these careers, the modifications they undergo, and the differences between the girls in this respect. And the starting point for this reformulation is precisely that lack of decisiveness which was shown to be so significant in Chapter 3, the analysis of the first set of interviews.

Significance of continued lack of occupational decision making

Most of the girls, that is, rather than doing as had been expected and finding that once at college they were able to decide definitely on a "career" and start to work towards it, were finding that they were still not really sure of what they wanted to do. It has, of course, already been described in detail in Chapter 3 how some started the period of the fieldwork with "no idea at all" of what they wanted to do, others were able to name occupations which, it was argued, were not definite choices, and a small number of the girls did seem to have clear occupational aims. But, as will be clear from the introductory section to this chapter, their time at college was characterised by an increase in their lack of decisiveness; by a moving away from the occupations first named, by frequent changes of decision, and by an inability to make any decision at all. And, furthermore, this was still largely the case at the time of the transition from college to employment. The transition was not, it can be suggested, a planned effort to enter a specific area of employment, to move further towards achieving entry into a specific "career". Not in the case of those who left during the first year, for most of

whom chance seemed to be a part of any explanation of their routes - Julie W. was "just chatting" at the hairdressers, a friend phoned Sue with news of a vacancy, a letter arrived for Catherine, and Vivienne was offered a full time job where she was working part time. Not in the case of those on one year O-level courses who left at the end of the first year, most of whom had had to make a decision of some kind yet still did not know what to do, or had changed their minds several times or felt unable to make a final choice of occupation at this stage so that they either left college without a job (Beverley and Julie S.); took whatever employment they could find (Elizabeth) or changed part time work into full time work (Susanne). And not in the case of those who left after two years; Liese, having learnt she had failed her A levels, continuing to work in her first job she had successfully applied for whilst waiting for her results, and June and Karen continuing in education (higher education and further education respectively) still without having made a definite occupational choice. Only in the cases, that is, of Janet and Irenia can it be suggested that they maintained the same occupational aim throughout the period of the fieldwork; that, although they may certainly have considered alternatives, they worked towards, and eventually achieved entry to training for, the type of occupation they had named at the start.

Any attempt to understand the stages at which these girls left educational routes, and specifically the "early" departure of the majority, must, then, it seems, certainly involve consideration of that set of data which suggests that the majority of the girls did not have clear occupational aims during the period of the study. And that this lack of decisiveness, whether it took the form of easily switching from their original aim, of leaving college because they were not sure what to do, or of continuing in educational routes because they still offered a means of deferment, is an important aspect of their accounts and a large part of any explanation of the

routes they took. And it will now be suggested that it is by asking why they had not confirmed their existing tentative choices, why they had not made new ones, - by focusing the question in this way - that it is possible to start to move towards an understanding of their subjective careers and any changes that were taking place in these.

Clearly, of course, any discussion of these questions must start from the position, as outlined at the start of this chapter, that these girls were now having to confront the fact that it would be difficult for them to enter the areas of work originally named, and that there was very little they were qualified to do that was not the dead end work they had rejected from the start. And it is necessary to consider the way this was being reinforced by those involved in careers work, who continued to represent to the girls only a very narrow and limited range of opportunities, who did not make available what few relevant routes might have existed.

But it will now be suggested that these objective constraints alone cannot account for their lack of decisiveness. In Chapter 3 the girls' lack of definite occupational aims was explained in terms of a lack of "motivation" to make decisions at that stage, in view of the existence of further education as a means of deferring occupational decision making. And it seems that questions of motivation - or some form of subjective constraint - may still be significant in explaining the girls' lack of decisiveness during the period at college. That although it would seem clearly that, in contrast to the start of the research, the motivation was now there to make definite occupational choices, yet still the girls had not tried as hard as they might have done. The ease with which they left college when the first opportunity offered and comments such as "I've not got a great feeling of anything I really want to do" (Julie S.); "If I decide on anything now I will change my mind later" (June) and "All plans seem fine at the time when you think about it and

then it disappears a couple of months later" (Vivienne) all certainly suggest that it is necessary to look beyond the objective constraints on them to understand why they had not confirmed their choices or made new ones. And, of course, most significant in this respect is the question once again of the lack of use of careers advice and information - a lack of use which had been explained at the start of the research in terms of the girls not yet needing advice because of the existence of further education as a route allowing deferment of decision making. That, whether confronted with the offer of a job, or facing the end of the year, they did now need to make decisions; and yet, as outlined at the start of this chapter, they were not turning towards official careers workers. They were emphasising their own role in finding out what was available or were relying on informal channels - all of which were less likely to make it possible for them to achieve what has been considered until not to be their primary aim, entry into a "career". Here, then, is an approach which seems to move some way towards an understanding of these girls' departure from educational routes; an approach which focuses on the lack of decisiveness in the girls' accounts as part of the explanation of their leaving college; and the way this needs to be understood partly at least in subjective terms. And it is the way in which many of the girls seemed to be unwilling, rather than unable, to confirm existing tentative choices or to decide on new ones, which suggests the necessity of questioning the validity of continuing to conceptualise the subjective careers of all the girls in terms of occupational centrality. Why, if their primary goal really was to "have a career", were they showing such a lack of decisiveness; a lack of decisiveness which, it seems, can be explained partly in terms of a "lack of motivation"? And it will now be suggested that it is only possible to answer this question, and to resolve the contradictions between lack of decisiveness (and its consequences for the routes they took) and the continued emphasis by the girls

on the importance of their occupational lives by recognising that changes have occurred in their subjective careers. The lack of decisiveness, it is suggested, can only be understood in the context of uncertainty about what was their main goal; of increasing questioning and doubt about whether they really did want to "have a career". And it is this questioning, and its implications for any discussion of what was happening to the girls' subjective careers, that provides the context for any attempt to understand the extent to which further education continued to be a satisfactory means of articulation of objective and subjective careers.

To conclude, the aim of this chapter has been to start to move towards an understanding of why further education college ceased, during the period of the study, to be a satisfactory means of articulation of their objective and subjective careers for the majority of the girls. It has been shown that, whilst, certainly, their increasing awareness of the limitations on them, of how difficult it was going to be to get the kind of job they had named at the start, was a very marked characteristic of all the girls' accounts, it was not possible to account satisfactorily for the routes they took in terms of their disenchantment with college, their defining it as a waste of time, when it seemed unlikely to make it possible for them to hold on to notions of "having a career". Their routes could not be understood in terms of a direct relationship between increasing awareness of objective constraints and a subjective career characterised in terms of occupational centrality. Any attempt to understand them, it was suggested, must involve consideration of changes taking place in their subjective careers, the extent to which some form of displacement of their occupational careers had occurred within these. And in the next chapter an attempt will be made to clarify and develop the nature of these changes, and the way in which they are related to increasing awareness of objective constraints as outlined at the start of this chapter.

Chapter 5. Reformulation of subjective careers: disenchantment with educational routes in terms of the relationship between objective constraints and a central life interest of "glamour".

It was suggested in the previous chapter that it was not totally satisfactory to attempt to understand the routes the girls were taking in terms of continued attempts to maintain the paramountcy of their subjective careers, these being conceptualised in terms of occupational centrality. That rather what was becoming clear was that any explanation of the routes they took would need to involve consideration of changes in their subjective careers, the development of a different set of subjective constraints, constraints possibly directing them away from the goal of having a "career" in the sense so far understood. In this chapter, then, an attempt will be made to understand what was happening to the girls' subjective careers during their time at college - most specifically how, and to what extent, their occupational careers were being displaced. And it will be argued that it is by attempting to understand how this has happened, and its implications for the means of articulation, that it is possible to develop a more satisfactory explanation of the routes the girls were taking.

It was suggested in Chapter 3 that the girls' subjective careers at the start of the research were best understood in terms of occupational centrality; and that the main points in support of this was the lack of evidence of any orientation towards a domestic career; the types of occupation they were naming and their rejection of ordinary/dead end work; and the great importance they were attaching to educational routes - specifically further education college - as a way of obtaining entry to the type of employment they were aiming for. And it was suggested in Chapter 4 that there did seem to be evidence to suggest that their occupational careers were still central and that it was possible

A further discussion of this is contained in the glossary at the end.

to some extent to understand the routes they took during the research in terms of continued efforts to maintain the paramountcy of these subjective careers. But that what was also emerging was a series of questions raising doubts about the validity of this analysis; suggesting rather that the routes the girls were taking might be indicative of a displacement of their occupational careers.

And in this chapter it will be suggested that the only way to understand these contradictions - between the continuation of some evidence of occupational centrality, and the routes they actually took - is by a reformulation of their subjective careers; a reformulation in which occupational centrality is only part of a more dominant "glamour" centrality; it is the line they were following at the start to achieve a dominant goal of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life.* But that as the research progressed the girls were, at different stages, and to different extents, moving away from the occupational line, as this has been understood so far, to other ways of achieving "glamour". And it is this process, the reasons for it, and the implications in terms of articulation of objective and subjective careers, which proves to be crucial in understanding the girls' routes.

The increasing significance of glamour as a component of subjective careers

The starting point for this kind of analysis, then, is that by introducing notions of "exciting", "interesting" and "different" into the analysis, it is possible to get a much fuller understanding of the decisions the girls were taking, the routes they were taking, and particularly of their disenchantment with college and departure from educational routes. Certainly, as developed in Chapter 4, the girls themselves were defining the routes they were taking partly in terms of a continued effort to enter the type of occupation named at

the start; disenchantment with college was in terms of its not making this possible. But, in addition, what was becoming increasingly clear as the research progressed was the significance of the aim of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life in any decisions the girls were taking.

Thus, a part of the explanation of why they were leaving college and educational routes - or thinking of leaving - was because it was "boring" and there were other more exciting things they could be doing. Of those who left during the first year, for example, Sue had said at her second interview in December "I'm bored stiff, I can't stand this place much longer" and, after she had left "I just got more and more bored I kept staying away from lessons, I wasn't learning anything, and even when I was in I wasn't paying attention". Catherine's explanation of her leaving was also partly in terms of college being boring, "It's always the same old thing and if you didn't like the next lesson you didn't go to it"; and part of Anna's explanation was "I had no idea how much I would have to study outside class there were too many distractions - friends and hobbies - I wanted to do too many things and when you have got full time study you can't it would have been a waste of two years because I wouldn't have worked". Similarly Julie W. left college twice during her first year, the first time because "I felt I was just wasting my time I didn't want to leave but I didn't want two years when I could be earning something", the second time because "I had no money, my friends were in different classes, I just kept feeling I was wasting my time". And finally Vivienne, who had been very doubtful from the start about whether she would "stick out" the course said, just before her decision to leave, "I've been getting cheesed off and not going in every other day I've thought of chucking it all but there is nothing else

to do I had a phase for speech therapy but I wouldn't have been able to cope with all the work another year at college and three at Poly. I don't think I could stick another year at college". And whilst, certainly, these themes were emerging most significantly in the accounts of those who left during the first year, they are also clearly a significant aspect of the accounts of many of the others, providing at least part of the explanation of the routes they were taking. Thus, Beverley had lost interest in beauty therapy training:—"When I was there it seemed just like school I couldn't stick another year and it's a three year course"; Elizabeth had decided against medical work because "I'd have to stay another three years at college doing O and A levels in science and I might not like it"; and Liese, having lost interest in journalism ("I don't want to go on waiting and waiting") had been thinking of leaving during her first year—"I might leave, I could do with some money and I'm really bored. I seem to have been studying for ages, I just can't be bothered doing anything at the moment" and later commented "I must have a year off before higher education I'm bored now, what would it be like at university?"

There are grounds for arguing, then, that college and educational routes were being defined as a waste of time not just because they were not making it possible for the girls to enter the type of occupation they wanted but also because they were not making it possible for them to have an "interesting/exciting/different" life.

And similarly, just as college was being defined in terms of whether they could "stick it out" so to some extent the employment they were entering was being defined as providing those elements of "interesting/exciting/different" which had been hoped for from college - either in terms of the intrinsic qualities of the work or

in terms of the money/free time it would make available. It was being evaluated in terms of the extent to which they found the experience of work "interesting/exciting/different" - "I'm doing something different every day we all go to the pub at lunch time" (Catherine); "We all have a laugh, it's not like being at work" (Vivienne); in terms of the possibility it afforded of future travel - in the case of Julie W., for example, for whom each type of employment she entered was seen as a "passport" to getting to Spain, and in the case of Sue, whose company had offices abroad to which she might be sent in the future; and in terms of the money they were earning making possible holidays and a car. And similarly those who were less enthusiastic about what they were doing were explaining their dissatisfaction partly in terms of lack of such qualities - Anna, for example, giving up lab. technician's work because of poor pay and the predominance of middle aged women in the laboratories. Thus, although there was certainly a lot of ambiguity in the girls' responses to the dead end employment they had entered - there was evidence of disappointment in the work they were doing, there was evidence that they were defining it to some extent in terms of its being a route to the kind of occupation they had named at the start - there was also sufficient evidence of their satisfaction with it, in terms of its being "interesting/exciting/different", - to suggest that these notions may now be important components of their subjective careers.

What has been suggested so far, then, is that by defining the girls' experience of college not only in relation to its ability to "deliver the goods" - to enable them to overcome the obstacles on their way to chosen areas of employment - but also in relation to its ability to satisfy their demands for something "interesting/exciting/different", a greater understanding is achieved of their disenchantment with educational routes. That, whether in terms of the boredom

of college (Sue, Catherine, Liese); in terms of the money they could be getting (Julie W., Beverley); in terms of the free time they could have to do what interested them (Anna); or in terms of the qualities they could find in employment itself, the girls' disenchantment with education, their defining it as a waste of time, is partly a product of its lack of "glamour".

It must be added here of course that it is possible to understand why all the girls were feeling some disenchantment with college in terms of its not providing an "interesting/exciting/different" life. All had come with very high expectations of its being different from school, more "grown up", more "interesting". And after the initial enthusiasm (see Chapter 3) they were finding that lessons, work and staff-student relationships were not so different from school. And furthermore, those aspects of college life which had attracted them so much at the start (the freedom to attend classes or not, the spare time during the day,) had proved in fact to add to their "boredom" - "We just sit around in the refectory all day". But the significant point is that not all the girls were responding to these dissatisfactions by giving up, or thinking seriously of giving up, education and entering employment immediately. And in that they were responding differently, it is possible to argue that "glamour" and what it entails, was more important to some than to others; that the difference between those who were willing to put up with it, carry on in spite of their dissatisfaction, and others who were using boredom, lack of interest and excitement, as predominant reasons for the decisions they were making, is grounds for arguing that for some of the girls these notions were, or had moved to, the centre of their subjective careers.

In terms of subjective career, then, a very complex picture

is now developing. It had seemed valid at the start of the research to state that the "moving perspective" was one in which occupational careers were central, although there were differences between the girls. During the time at college it seems that on the one hand occupational careers still were central - it is still valid to conceptualise their careers in this way, as reflected in the girls' interpretations and definitions; but that notions of "exciting", "interesting", "different" were assuming increasing significance in the accounts of many of them, coming possibly even to dominate their subjective careers. And in the following sections an attempt will be made to understand the reasons for and implications of those changes.

The relationship between occupational centrality and "glamour" centrality

The first step, then is to ask what is the relationship between these two "strands" of the girls' subjective careers - the occupational and the "glamorous". Can it be argued that it was a misrepresentation from the start to conceptualise the girls' careers - or at least those of some of the girls - in terms of occupational centrality? Or is it being argued that occupational careers have been displaced - have given way to "glamorous" careers. And if so why? And, most significantly how is it possible to explain the coexistence of the two strands in the same girl?

And it will be argued now that it is only by a reformulation of the girls' subjective careers that it is possible to make sense of the data giving rise to these questions. That what was becoming increasingly clear during the research was that occupational centrality was only making sense in the context of a dominant goal of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life. And that changes in the girls' subjective careers during the research, and differences between the girls, were best conceptualised in terms of a shifting,

a moving towards, different "lines" of achieving this dominant goal.

First, then, it seems clear that the analysis of the girls' subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality at the start was valid. It has already been argued that the lack of evidence to support domestic centrality, the rejection of dead end employment, and the significance attached to educational routes as the avenue to the type of employment they wanted, are grounds for stating that their occupational careers were central at that time. It is clear, also, that it is not valid to conceptualise the girls' careers in terms of some form of displacement of these occupational careers to be replaced by "glamorous" careers. As has been shown already, there was evidence of occupational centrality throughout the research - with the possible exception of Julie S.. And in addition, of course, the emphasis on having an "interesting/exciting/different" life is not new - as was shown in Chapter 3 it was certainly present in their accounts at the start of the research, although subsumed under a dominant occupational career.

What, then, will be suggested is that the only way to understand what was happening in terms of the relationship between the goal of having a "career" and the goal of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life is to conceptualise their careers at the start in terms of the two goals, that they coexisted at that stage. But that when the girls' careers were reformulated, the central place for most of them was taken by notions of glamour, and this was being articulated through an occupational line at the start because of parental pressure and because it was so easily available. That is, the kind of job they got was very important to them, but primarily because it was a way of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life. And within this reformulation the lack of evidence of any kind of domestic centrality and the rejection of

dead end employment both make sense in that both were, within the girls' definitions, not likely to provide an "interesting/exciting/different" life. It was only through entering certain types of occupation that this could be achieved.

By reformulating the girls' subjective careers in this way, then, it is clear that it is possible to arrive at a much clearer understanding of the differences between the girls at the start of the research - differences based on the balance between occupational centrality and "glamour" centrality. All the girls' subjective careers could be conceptualised in terms of occupational centrality at the start; the differences between them lay in the extent to which their main aim was to have a "glamorous" life, the extent to which the occupational line was only significant as a way of achieving this. That is, just as the girls started the research differently located in relation to objective career constraints, so they were differently located in relation to subjective constraints. There were very clear distinctions between, for example, Beverley and Julie for whom "glamour" was a central part of their subjective careers, and Janet and Irenia for whom it seemed "glamour" was of little significance; for whom, possibly because of overriding interest in a subject (Irenia), possibly because of some kind of detachment from a culture of "glamour" (Janet) the conceptualisation of their subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality was ^{totally} valid.

And it is also clear that this reformulation makes possible a much clearer understanding of the changes taking place in the girls' subjective careers during the research and resolves to a large extent many of the contradictions in the data. That what was happening during the time at college was that, to different degrees and at different stages, displacement was taking place of their occupational careers. But it was a displacement only in the sense that having a "career" in the usual sense of the word, with all that

it implies in terms of a long period of training and waiting, working towards an occupation with "good pay and promotion prospects" was no longer a major part of the moving perspective. They were looking for, and turning towards, other ways of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life. But of course it was not a turning away from the occupational line completely. Occupational careers were not totally being displaced, they were still trying to achieve their dominant aim through an occupational line; but it is no longer an occupational line which can be equated with notions of "having a career".

What is being argued, then, is that by conceptualising their subjective careers and the changes in them in terms of the different, changing positions of occupational centrality within a predominantly dominant goal of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life it is possible to understand the form being taken by the girls' subjective careers during the research and the consequences this had for their behaviour. Their subjective careers were changing during the period at college; there was a change in their moving perspectives. It was a change which can encompass their turning away from educational routes without necessarily having to equate this with total displacement of their occupational careers. And it was a change which makes it possible to understand some of the seeming contradictions in the data - the continued assertions of the importance of their occupational lives, the continued rejection in their accounts of dead end employment, alongside all that evidence that seemed to indicate that "having a career" was no longer their dominant aim. Their departure from educational routes and the type of employment they entered, in the context of a continued lack of clear occupational aims and a reluctance to seek help from official institutions of careers advice and information, are not indicative of a total displacement of their occupational careers. They are indicative rather of a process of questioning the dominant place of educational routes

and the types of occupation they were leading to, a process of looking for other ways, still predominantly occupational, of achieving their dominant goal. They no longer wanted "careers" but neither had they submitted to a "domestic ideology".

How then are these changes in the girls' subjective careers - and the differences within the group in terms of the extent and state of the change - to be explained?

Explanation of changes in subjective careers.

It was suggested in Chapter 3 that the girls' "moving perspective" at the start of the research - specifically the centrality of occupational careers within the moving perspective - was partly a product of parental pressures and meanings derived from the girls' own culture; but that the lack of consideration of objective constraints in their accounts also suggested that it was necessary to consider the significance of the fact that these girls had not had to confront these constraints yet due to lack of necessity to make definite occupational decisions; and that it was this which provided a large part of the explanation of their subjective careers. And it will now be argued that the changes that have taken place can be explained within the same kind of framework.

First, then, it is clear that any analysis of the girls' subjective careers, and the changes in them, must include the way in which these careers were a product of parental pressures and of pressures derived from whatever form of adolescent culture was significant for these girls. And that whilst, certainly, it seems that parents, as the research progressed, were not so enthusiastic about educational routes as they had been at the start, this is possibly not so significant as the changes taking place in the immediate group from which the girls were deriving their meanings. Most parents, as has already been outlined, were supportive rather

than directive - they were following the direction set by the girls. Of more significance, it seems, is the girls' increasing involvement in some form of college culture, as part of the explanation of their turning away from educational routes. It was suggested at the start of the research that it was possible to understand the dominant place given to occupational careers in their moving perspectives in terms of their lack of involvement in an adolescent culture of the type most usually identified with teenage girls, and their involvement in a culture central to which were notions of "having a career" and, of being, specifically, "a glamorous career girl". To the extent that the college culture of which they were most aware was an "alienated" one - "everybody is thinking of leaving"; "nobody knows what to do"; "we all just sit in the refectory all day long" this must enter into any explanation of subjective changes; although this lack of involvement in a "student" culture, it will subsequently be suggested, must itself be placed in the context of further changes to be discussed below.

Changes have occurred, then, in those areas from which the girls were deriving many of their interpretations and meanings; these are a part of any explanation of their moving away from educational routes. But it will now be suggested that it is the girls' increasing consideration of the objective constraints on them - in contrast to their lack of consideration at the start of the research - which provides the most significant part of the explanation. That the increased consideration of the constraints on them, as outlined in Chapter 4, is very important in explaining their routes - but only in relation to the reformulation, as outlined above, of their subjective careers.

As was shown in Chapter 4, then, the period of the research was marked by the girls' increasing awareness of the limitations on them, of how difficult it was going to be to get the kind of job they wanted, had named at the start; and it was shown that there were

differences between the girls in this respect - that some were facing fewer obstacles than others both in terms of their own qualifications and in terms of the openings in the kind of fields they wanted to enter. And it was suggested that whilst to some extent it seemed possible to account for the routes they took in terms of their position in relation to objective career constraints, the extent to which it seemed college would make it possible for them to overcome some of these, and their continued efforts to attain entry to a "career" when confronted with these limitations, this approach was not a satisfactory one. What will now be suggested is that certainly it is very significant that for the first time at college they were becoming aware of the constraints on them, realising how long and difficult it was going to be to get the kind of job they had named; certainly this needs to be placed in the context of the increasing pressure on them once at college to decide what they were going to do; and certainly the significance of this process lay in the way the girls were responding to the realisation of how long and difficult it was going to be. But that the increasing awareness of the constraints on them assumes significance only in relation to the reformulation of their subjective careers, as outlined at the start of this chapter - it assumes explanatory power only in relation to a subjective career dominated by notions of "interesting/exciting/different".

It is the realisation, that is, of how long and difficult it was going to be to get the kind of job they had named at the start in relation to a central life interest of "glamour" which is the central point of the analysis. And, of course, of the greatest significance here is the way in which college, and possibly other educational routes, were proving unlikely to provide those elements of "interest/excitement/difference" now identified as being of such importance in the girls' subjective careers; the way the girls were

realising that college was not all that different from school, and that other routes - more "interesting/exciting/different" in themselves or in terms of the money and free time they would make available - did exist. The significance of the increasing awareness of the objective constraints on them lay, that is, in the realisation that not only would it be a long and difficult route to enter a "career" occupation; it would be a route providing none of those elements of "glamour" which they had expected and which have been shown to be significant aspects of their subjective careers.

It is, then, the way in which constraints are mediated, interpreted, assume significance, in relation to a central life interest, which is central to this analysis. It is this, it is suggested, which provides the most satisfactory framework for understanding the routes these girls took. The speed with which, and the extent to which, each girl turned away, subjectively, from educational routes can be understood as depending partly on her position in relation to objective constraints - the obstacles in her path to a "career" - and her awareness of these; on how long and difficult - and boring - it was going to be for her to attain entry into the type of occupation named at the start (as illustrated, perhaps, by the case of Gillian, remaining in educational routes in spite of the dominance of notions of "glamour" in her subjective career because of her favourable position in relation to objective constraints, the few obstacles she had to overcome, and consequently her willingness to "put up with" college as she could see the end of the road); and it can be understood as depending partly on the extent to which it was "glamour" rather than "having a career" which had been her central life interest from the start; the extent to which an occupational line was being followed purely because it was an easy and available route to having an "interesting/exciting/different" life. Depending, that is, on what was her central life interest, each girl would respond differently to increasing awareness of the constraints. To the extent that "glamour" was her dominant aim,

that her commitment to educational/training routes was limited, then, in the context of college not enabling her to have an "interesting/exciting/different" life she would turn away from educational routes as she became aware of, and according to the extent of, the obstacles confronting her. And to the extent that notions of "glamour" were of little significance to her, that it was valid to conceptualise her subjective career in terms of occupational centrality as originally understood, then she would continue in educational routes in spite of the obstacles to be overcome.

Although, of course it is clear that modifications need to be introduced into this kind of analysis. That if it is the "boring" nature of college - the extent to which it was not enabling them to have an "interesting/exciting/different" life - which is a significant part of any explanation of why they were becoming disenchanted when it seemed that it was going to take a long time before they could achieve their goal, then clearly it is necessary to bring into the analysis the extent to which "glamorous" alternatives existed, and the extent to which educational routes may have come to be defined as "glamorous". That is, that girls were only going to turn away from "boring" educational routes to the extent that more promising openings emerged - hence the difference between the stages of leaving of e.g. Catherine and June. And of course it is also possible that girls would stay in educational routes to the extent that they continued to be defined, or came to be defined, as "glamorous" - hence the significance of returning to college on a different course (Julie W.) and the significance of a change of educational institution. (As an example of this latter, of course, June and Karen, both of whom made frequent comments on the "boredom" of college, nevertheless remained in education but in institutions which could be defined as more "glamorous".)

In attempting to understand the development of this new subjective constraint, then, - the changes in their subjective careers

centring around the extent to which educational routes were losing their significance - it has been argued so far that what is of primary importance is the girls' increasing awareness of the constraints on them, the way these were being interpreted in the light of the girls' subjective careers, their central life interest; that awareness of how long and difficult and boring it was going to be resulted in the girls, at different stages, depending on their position in relation to objective constraints and the importance of "glamour" to them, turning away, subjectively, from educational routes. That this, certainly, was reinforced by changes in parental expectations and by their involvement in an "alienated" college subculture. But that, in so far as these two latter are to be understood within the same kind of framework, parents following very closely the direction given by the girls, and the college culture being a product to a large extent of precisely the relationship between objective constraints and central life interest outlined above, primary importance still attaches to the analysis developed in this chapter.

In summary, then, it was argued from the data of the first set of interviews that the most significant set of constraints on these girls were not simply those objective ones stemming from the relationship between their educational qualifications and the occupational structure; that a fuller understanding of their routes needed to start from their subjective careers, the centrality of occupational careers within them and attempts to maintain the paramountcy of those careers. That these routes were to be understood in terms of attempts to articulate their objective and subjective careers. And what is now being argued is that, similarly, it is changes in the girls' subjective careers during the period of the research which must be central to any analysis of their rejection

of college. Further education was no longer providing a means of articulating their objective and subjective careers - it was being defined as a "waste of time" primarily because of the way in which their occupational careers had become partly displaced during the time at college; the way in which, whilst, certainly, there were still elements of occupational centrality in their subjective careers, the girls were no longer envisaging their lives in terms of movement towards a "career", involving as it does a long period of education and training. And it is this change, and the difference between the girls in this respect, which is central to any analysis of the routes they took.

Finally, of course, it is quite valid to argue that a distinction should be made between "preparedness" to leave educational routes, and the actual point of departure; that, given that the girls had become disenchanted with further education - that it was no longer a satisfactory form of articulation of their objective and subjective careers - the analysis must be completed by a consideration of those factors which "triggered off" their actual departure from college. But whilst the significance, for these girls, of such factors as "unexpected offers of jobs providing more satisfactory forms of articulation (Sue, Vivienne, Catherine, Julie W.); the sequencing of the educational year, completion of a one year course necessitating some kind of turning point (Beverley, Julie S., Elizabeth); problems at college - academic, social or practical (Anna, Julie W., Elizabeth); or definite pressure or advice from outside college (Elizabeth), is acknowledged, it is nevertheless maintained that, given the way in which educational routes were no longer part of the girls' subjective careers, then any one of a number of factors could have "triggered off" their departure. It is their preparedness to leave college - and the reasons for this - which must form the centre of the analysis.

Conclusion

It was suggested at the start of Chapter 4 that the two most significant characteristics of the routes these girls had taken during the research were that, firstly, all the girls entered female areas of employment; and that, secondly, the majority entered dead end areas of employment, having left college "early". And it was suggested that whilst entry into female areas of employment was clearly a product of "structural" constraints arising predominately from the fact that all except one girl had no technical or scientific experience or qualifications and consequently the types of employment open to them were very limited, it was the entry of the majority into dead end employment, in comparison with those who continued in educational routes to train for a "career", which needed further explanation. That, within the parameters set by the structural constraints, there were routes other than clerical and shopwork open to them if they could gain the necessary qualifications, which most of them did not. And this failure to overcome the obstacles, it has been suggested, is largely a product of a process of "opting out" of education, a process which can be understood largely in terms of changes in the girls' subjective careers, of the way in which, at different speeds and to different extents, notions of a "career", with all that it implies in terms of long periods of education and training, no longer played an important part in their moving perspectives. The major subjective change centred around the extent to which although ^{their} occupational careers were still significant, these had now become disassociated from educational routes. And it has been argued that this turning away can be understood primarily in terms of the girls' increasing awareness of the objective constraints on them and the way these were interpreted in the light of a central life interest.

And, of course, in that departure from educational routes

- into dead end employment - has been shown to be a product of the way in which increasing awareness of objective constraints resulted in a realisation that the "career" route was not providing the most satisfactory means of articulating their objective and subjective careers, then it is certainly possible to suggest that those who have stayed in educational routes will not necessarily continue in them, will not necessarily enter training for a "career". To the extent that it is notions of "glamour" that dominate their subjective careers, then it is still possible for them to give up the aim of achieving entry into a "career" (although still holding on to some kind of occupational line) if this shows signs of not enabling them to achieve their main goal. Thus, in the cases of June and Karen, who have been able to continue in "glamorous" educational routes by virtue of gaining two A levels, and parental willingness to support more studies in further education, respectively, their continuing in educational routes towards a "career" is a line which they may later give up if confronted with significant constraints. It is only in the case of Janet and Irenia, for whom occupational centrality did seem a valid conceptualisation of their subjective careers, and who therefore might be expected to struggle on, in the face of difficulties, and Gillian, who is now very near attaining her goal of working in a "glamorous" occupation, that it might be expected that they will not now enter dead end areas of employment.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The aim of this research, then, has been to describe, and try to offer some explanation for, the educational and occupational routes taken by girls, routes which generally lead to the female sector of the labour force. The starting point of the research had been that there is now a large amount of evidence to suggest that there are constraints on girls' choices, constraints arising from several areas of the social structure and working to direct girls into the female sector of the labour force - either in the way they limit opportunities directly, or in the way they act to structure ambitions and aspirations. And it was suggested that any further understanding of the routes girls take would need to examine more closely the relationship between direct constraints and aspirations, especially as they develop over a period, and to separate the constraints arising from class or ability, from those which are a product of sexual divisions in society. With these aims, then, the research was planned as a small scale exploratory study of the careers - in both the objective and subjective senses - of a group of middle class girls who had just enrolled in further education, the intention being to trace their careers, and the constraints on their careers until they left college.

Given, then, that all the girls entered female areas of employment, and that most of the girls in this study entered dead end employment - employment of low status, low pay, poor promotion and training prospects - in those areas of the occupational structure in which, it was pointed out at the start, women predominate, to what extent has this study been able to explain how it happened? And to what extent does the validity of the results extend beyond this group of girls?

It is clear, first of all, that this work has demonstrated

the validity of attempting to understand the routes girls take, the choices they make, in terms of constraints on them; and in terms of constraints which are a product not only of their class position, not even primarily of their ability level, but of their position in a society stratified by sexual divisions. In terms of their class position - the socioeconomic status of their families and the implications this had in terms of orientation towards education and work and provision of financial support - it could be expected that these girls would have fewer constraints on them than the majority of school leavers (although, certainly, it is clear that the lack of informed guidance and support, in the case of the majority, due to their position as first generation college students, was a significant factor in this study). In terms of their ability level, as measured by level of qualification when they left school, most were more qualified than the majority of school leavers; although, in that many had fewer than five O levels, and that differences of destination within the group did reflect to some extent their level of qualification (i.e. those with fewest qualifications at the start were most likely to have entered dead end employment on leaving college) this seemed to be a more significant potential and actual source of constraint than their class position. But even here there are discrepancies. Whilst, certainly, some of those who entered dead end occupations were those with the fewest qualifications at the start (Sue, Vivienne); and some of those who entered training for a "career" were those with most qualifications at the start (Janet, Gillian), there were exceptions; Elizabeth and Anna, for example, entering dead end occupations, in contrast to Irenia, who had started with so few qualifications. And it is suggested that the discrepancy between what the girls could have been expected to have achieved on the basis of socioeconomic status of their families and starting level of qualification - given particularly the wide range of the

local labour market at a time of relatively low levels of unemployment - and the level at which the majority of them entered the work force, can only be accounted for in terms of constraints which are a product of their place in a society stratified by sexual divisions.

And it has been suggested that it is possible to a large extent to identify these constraints. That the routes the girls took were constrained to a large extent by not only the level but particularly the range of their qualifications; and by the lack of relevance of careers work and the way they were channelled, with varying degrees of explicitness, into dead end employment: constraints which are a product primarily of patterns of gender division within schooling. But objective constraints in themselves cannot account for the entry of the majority into dead end work; the distinction between these, and the few who entered training for a "career." It is only by introducing into the analysis the girls' subjective careers, the extent to which notions of "glamour" dominated these careers, and the changes taking place subjectively in response to an awareness of direct constraints on them, that it is possible to understand the routes they took. And, it will now be argued, these girls' subjective careers are essentially feminine careers; and it is their identification, attempts to explain them, and to understand the way in which they relate to objective constraints on the girls, that constitute the main findings of this research.

It has been suggested, that is, in this report that, whilst at the start of the research it had seemed valid to conceptualise the girls' subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality, changes taking place during the research period were grounds for arguing that a reformulation, for most of the girls at least, in terms of "glamour" centrality was justified - that those findings which had been used as grounds for characterising the girls' subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality could equally - and more fruitfully - be used as evidence for the centrality

of a "glamorous" career which was being articulated through an occupational line. The main goal of most of these girls was to have an "interesting/exciting/different" life. And, it is argued, this is essentially a feminine career - just as is the domestic career of which there is so little evidence, and just as is the occupational career identified at the start. Feminine careers, that is, are not limited to domestic careers, with their implications of early marriage and childbearing and a future of economic dependency. Feminine careers are all those which contain elements of femininity as defined in Chapter I, basic to which is the distinction between men's and women's work, interests and activities - whether "domestic", centring on women's roles as wife and mother; "occupational", with a predominance of occupational aims concerned with helping people and caring; or "glamorous", the definitions of "interesting/exciting/different" being essential feminine ones, involving meeting people, travel, etc. And all can be understood as a product of girls' experiences in the home and at school, in terms of media definitions of femininity, and as taking shape within girls' adolescent subcultures.

And whichever type assumes dominance in any particular group of girls, it is argued, depends partly on social class and ability level and partly on the stage which girls have reached in their educational careers. The increased likelihood, that is, of girls who are from working class families aspiring towards a domestic future, compared with their middle class contemporaries, has already been noted, as has the significance of ability divisions. It is the girl who is working class and of low ability who is most likely to envisage her future in terms of early marriage and motherhood; the girl who is middle class and of high ability who is most likely to be aiming for a "career". The significance of the notion of a "glamorous" career, it seems, lies in its relevance, first, in explaining

the aspirations of girls who do not fit clearly into either of these categories and, secondly, in its power to explain changes taking place in girls' aspirations. It is, it may be suggested, possibly a useful way of conceptualising the subjective careers of girls who are "middle class", with what this may entail in terms of family commitment to education, lack of pressure to start work immediately, high occupational aspirations, etc.; and of "middle ability" with what this implies in terms of lack of access to many educational and training routes but over-qualification for traditional dead end employment. And, in that it is most overt at a stage in their educational careers when the girls are giving up their high aspirations, when they are in a state of "flux", it is a formulation which helps to illuminate the process of change; it is through the notion of a "glamorous" career that it is possible to understand the move from aiming for a "career" to entering dead end employment.

And it is this emphasis on the fluidity of a "glamorous" career which brings to the fore questions of what happens to these girls next; and brings to the fore, similarly, questions of sources of influence on the changes taking place. First, then, it will be suggested that the stage which these girls have reached by the end of the research is only a temporary one. It has been shown how, during the period of the study, most moved from the goal of "having a career" to other ways of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life - still, predominantly, through the occupations they entered; whilst others maintained, for the present, but possibly only for the present, the same goal, remaining in educational/training routes. But, it will now be suggested, there might be other ways of achieving the goal of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life - routes of which there is not necessarily any evidence in this study, but which might be significant for other groups of girls or which might become significant later in the case of these girls. It is suggested

that just as at the start of the fieldwork the goal of these girls was to "have a career," and just as that changed during the period of the study to the goal of entering any employment which would provide, or make possible, some elements of "glamour," so "marriage and children" could come to be defined in the same kind of way. This was not the case during the fieldwork (except possibly for Julie S. for whom early marriage certainly seemed to be emerging as a possible means of articulation) because of the processes which had resulted in their taking the occupational line and still holding to it in a different form. But it can be suggested, very tentatively, that as the employment they have entered becomes less satisfactory in terms of achieving their goal of having an "interesting/exciting/different" life, there might be a move towards the domestic line as a way of achieving it. But of course this will depend, as have the changes which have occurred so far, on what is happening to many areas of their lives inside and outside college. Attention in this work has focused on the significance of increasing awareness of the direct constraints on them (and the lack of relevance of official institutions of careers advice and information in helping the girls to overcome them) as a major explanation for the girls' move away from the goal of "having a career." And it has been suggested that any process of opting out by those still in educational routes may also perhaps best be understood within this kind of framework. But it is certainly necessary to be aware of the potential significance of other factors - changes, possibly, in their lives outside college - which, although not emerging as significant in this study, might be so for a different group of girls, and which certainly might be more significant in any move from dead end employment to marriage and childbearing.

The main findings of this research, then, have related to the development and expansion of the notion of a feminine career and the way in which this can take different lines in response to,

particularly in this study, awareness of direct constraints. Reference was made in Chapter I (P.19) to the work of Willis and McRobbie in demonstrating the complexity of the relationship between class and gender control; the significance, respectively, of the working class "lads" culture, with its emphasis on masculinity, and the working class girls' "cult of femininity" as providing a means of resisting the class culture of the school ¹. Analysis of the antischool culture of the working class "lads", Willis suggested, and its similarity to shop floor culture, provided a way of understanding the type of employment entered without resorting to "simple determinist and economist views of what makes kids go into the factory" ². The attractiveness of the working class culture needed to be posited to "establish properly the level of "voluntarism" by which these lads go to a future that most would account an impoverished one" ³. And his analysis of the way in which, in certain respects, school (and factory) counter cultures actually, in the end, "do the work of bringing about the future that others have mapped out for them" ⁴ is paralleled by McRobbie's analysis of the way the girls in her study endorsed the traditional female role; "marriage, family life, fashion and beauty all contribute massively to this feminine anti-school culture and, in doing so, nicely illustrate the contradictions inherent in so-called oppositional activities. Are the girls in the end not simply doing exactly what is required of them - and if this is the case, then could it not be convincingly argued that it is their own culture which itself is the most effective agent of social control for girls, pushing them into compliance with that role which a whole range of institutions in capitalist society also, but less effectively, directs them towards?" ⁵. The notion of a feminine career, and specifically of a "glamorous" career, as developed in the present study, it is suggested, builds on and supports this previous work on school cultures, and their implications for entry into employment. It has been shown that, in the case of these middle class girls, their entry into employment

needs to be understood in the context of the meanings which they invest in education and in work, meanings which derive from, and are part of, their subjective careers. It is clear that, these girls colluded, through their notions of femininity, at entering into female occupations. But, it is suggested, it is only through underlining the complexity of the notion of a feminine career - by recognising that feminine careers can take different lines and that each of these in different ways may result in girls eventually entering those areas of work "already mapped out for them" - that it is possible to arrive at a more complete explanation of the process, and specifically of the entry of the majority of the girls into dead end work.

In that these findings are based on a case study of one particular group of girls who, as has already been noted in Chapter 2, are unrepresentative in many ways of girls making the transition from education to work, no claims are being made for the validity of extending it beyond this group. It is suggested, however, to conclude this work, that some of the findings do have relevance beyond the scope of this study, in particular

- 1) the notion of a feminine career which can be articulated in a number of ways, including the occupational - which is therefore an alternative to, rather than opposed to, the domestic line with which feminine careers are more usually equated.

- 2) the demonstration of one particular type of relationship between direct constraints and aspirations whereby the ways in which the former become part of the girls' construction of reality can account for changes in aspirations - modifications of subjective careers in the context of which further direct constraints will be interpreted.

- 3) and the isolation of constraints arising from position in a system of sexual stratification from constraints relating to class

and ability; and the demonstration of the relationship between them.

These are all possible starting points, it is suggested, for further attempts to understand how girls come to make the "choices", take the routes they do, routes which lead them to take their place in the sexual division of labour in society.

APPENDIX 1 - GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Dead end employment Dead end employment is used here and throughout this work, to denote employment with low pay and status, demanding few educational qualifications, and, specifically, with no training or promotion prospects, no "career ladder". It is that type of employment in which, according to any analysis of the vertical division of the labour market, as outlined on p.1, women predominate and which they predominantly enter. And whilst, certainly, other terms (e.g. "careerless") may convey broadly the same meaning, the significance of using dead end in this work is that, occurring frequently as it does in the girls' accounts, it provides a valuable link between the girls' common sense interpretations of the occupational structure and theories of the sexual division of labour and the dual labour market. These girls were clearly aware from the start that much work can be categorised as dead end; it is the process of uncovering the meaning of and significance attached to dead end for them and the relationship between dead end and lack of "glamour" which provides a valuable contribution to explanations of their eventual entry into such work.

Career Career is used in two senses in this work: firstly, in a symbolic interactionist sense, as developed on pp23-25 and secondly to denote "employment with career prospects", employment which is the opposite to those dead end types identified at the start of Chapter I. When used in this latter sense it will always appear in quotation marks.

Class and socioeconomic status Whilst parents' position is described in terms of socioeconomic status, the girls are referred to throughout the work in terms of their class position. Whilst recognizing that two different dimensions of social stratification

are being used here, the use of "class" to locate the girls is justified in terms of a) the way in which these girls clearly differed from "working class" girls as described in other studies (e.g. Sharpe) b) the need to work within the tradition of those analyses outlined in Chapter I which distinguish between girls in terms of their class position.

"Occupational" careers and "domestic" careers "Occupational" careers and "domestic" careers refer to specific strands which may be identified within girls' (or boys') subjective careers. And whilst it is clear that analyses of subjective careers in terms of domestic centrality would refer to the way in which girls envisage their lives primarily in terms of marrying and having children, the meaning of occupational centrality, and the extent to which it can be equated with the aim of "having a career" is not so clear. And it will be shown in this report that whilst, certainly, there were grounds, at the start of the research, for investing similar meanings in these two notions, this did not continue to be the case. And that any understanding of the routes these girls took needs to recognize the possibility of continuing to conceptualize girls' subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality whilst abandoning any attempt to claim that their main aim is to "have a career".

"Glamour" and "glamorous" careers "Glamour" is being used in this study to encompass precisely these notions of "interesting", "exciting" and "different"; and "glamorous" careers refer to those subjective careers which are dominated by such notions. The emergence of this concept as one of the major "findings" of the study needs to be understood in terms of a) the way in which it is grounded in the frequency and significance of references to "interesting/exciting/different"; b) the meanings which the girls invested in "interesting/exciting/different" - the predominance of e.g. travelling, meeting

people, lack of routine, new experiences, in these definitions;
c) the fact that these are, as developed in Chapter 6, essentially feminine definitions and that d) they need to be understood as partly media defined and to be located in the development of a particular type of female adolescent subculture (see Chapter 3). "Glamour" has been selected as the single word that best encapsulates all these connotations of modern femininity to which the majority of the girls more or less consciously, more or less completely, aspire.

Preliminary work

1976

March and April. Meeting with local authority advisor for further education to discuss possible research location.

Research outline presented to deputy principal of college, permission granted.

Contact made with college careers officer as "guide" to the college.

May to July. Limited teaching role in the college.

Discussions with students and members of staff resulting in the decision to work with two specific tutorial groups.

Main research period

Collection of data from interviews
with the girls

Other sources of informatio

(Most of these interviews took place in a small room behind the library, especially allocated for the research.

Each interview lasted between 25 and 50 minutes and was recorded. For details of interview guides see Appendix 3.)

(See Chapter 2, pp 42-45 for further details)

1976

Sept. Initial contact made with the two tutorial groups.

First set of interviews - 16 girls

Nov. Leavers Interview - Julie W.

Dec. Leavers Interview - Vivienne

Dec. Second set of interviews.

Initial contact made with local authority careers service.

<u>Collection of data from interviews with the girls - Continued</u>	<u>Other sources of information - Continued</u>
<u>1977</u>	
Feb/Mar Leavers interviews - Sue, Catherine and Julie W. (2nd time)	Visit to 1st of the 5 schools - interview with the teacher "responsible for careers work"
April Third set of interviews - 12 girls.	
May Leavers interview - Anna	Visit to 2nd school. Visit to 3rd school (June).
July Fourth set of interviews - 11 girls.	Visit to 4th and 5th schools
Sept/Oct Fifth set of interviews - 6 girls still at college. Contact also made with all those who had left during the first year. Interviews with 8. Two contacted by letter.	Meetings with:- 1. representative of Manchester Employment Service Agency. 2. Manager of local employment office.
<u>1978</u>	
March Sixth set of interviews with those still at college.	
Aug/Sept Seventh set of interviews, with 5 girls who had now completed 2 yr A level course. (A level results known by late August)	Meetings with careers office (2nd contact) and L.E.A. advisors, for secondary education and for further education.
Oct. Interview with the one girl (Irenia) who remained at college for a 3rd year. Contact maintained with her by letter, after researcher's move away from the area Spring 1979. Final contact August 1979.	N.B. Contact was maintained throughout this period (inside and outside college and by telephone) with college staff.

Appendix 3. Interview Guides.

A. The First Set of Interviews. Sept. 1976.

1. Background:- age; education and educational qualifications; courses for which enrolled; father's occupation.
2. Educational and occupational aims; immediate and long term.
3. Reasons for any occupational choices they had made - or were making - with specific reference to constraints that were a product of experiences a) at school b) in the family c) within an adolescent subculture; and to constraints that were related to the characteristics of the occupational structure.
4. The further education route; reasons for applying to college and the process of application and enrollment.

B. Subsequent Scheduled Interviews. Dec. 1976 - May 1977.

1. Present educational and occupational aims.
2. Reasons for any change in aims since previous set of interviews.
3. Progress with the college course; any academic, social or practical problems.

C. Leavers Interviews.

- a) Those who left during the first year or at the end of one year - predominately "early" leavers.

1. Account of events leading up to departure and reasons for leaving (including O level results where relevant).
2. Present employment.
3. Educational and occupational plans now.

b) Those who left at the end of two/three years. August/Sept. 1978 & 9.

1. Educational and occupational plans (centred around A level results).

N.B. Sections B and C also included sets of questions designed to check or further develop, significant "themes" as they were emerging. (See Chapter 2, p.45).

e.g. Extent of, and form taken by, "opting out of" educational routes.

Reasons for the increasing consideration of objective constraints - specifically in relation to the role of careers officers; and increasing pressure to make decisions.

Justification for continuing to conceptualise subjective careers in terms of occupational centrality.

Significance of continued lack of occupational decision making.

Meaning of increasing references to the boredom of college, in relation to the emergence of "glamour" as a central component of subjective careers.

D. Interviews with those who had been in employment more than twelve months by the end of the fieldwork.

1. Present employment; any changes in employment over the past year; reasons for any changes.

(This set of interviews was made possible only by some girls having left college very early in their courses. It had not been part of the original research strategy to interview girls after this length of time in employment; and the data from these interviews, although certainly providing a useful starting point for the development of further hypotheses, is not fully integrated into the analysis.)

The process of occupational choice: a summary of each girl's account

The aim of presenting each girl as a separate case history in this way is to make more meaningful the analysis developed in the preceding pages. These are, of course, only the bare outlines of the girls' accounts - based primarily on what they said at the start of each interview - but even as such it is hoped they will provide a useful complement to the main report.

Sue. Mixed secondary modern. 7 CSE's and 3 O levels. Enrolled for 2 year A-level course (English and Biology) with some O levels. Occupational aim at the start: journalist (eventually on a wildlife magazine).

"They were all saying do office work at school but I had made a point of not doing office practice". "The careers teacher never came near and my parents said it was up to me as long as I didn't sit at home." She needed five O levels to train for journalism but was doubting if she would manage it. Towards the end of her first term she was "bored stiff" - "I can't stand this place much longer. I would look for a job and get one but I need my subjects for journalism and I don't want to work in a factory or shop - I'm not that desperate that I will take anything." She left college in December 1976 to work as clerk/receptionist in a transport company. "I just got more and more bored - I kept staying away from lessons - I wasn't learning anything and even when I was in I wasn't paying attention. I'd written loads of letters - to papers, radio, magazines - asking if there were vacancies, and sent up for jobs that sounded O.K., and got replies weeks later saying no interview. Then a friend phoned up and said there was a job going where she worked so I rang up and had an interview the same day." (Four others had applied. They had not

asked for qualifications.) "Taking the job was a let down because I was determined to stick it out, but only English matters really and I can get that at night school. And radio and T.V. said it was good to have office experience and there is the travelling thing!" (the firm had offices abroad.) Three months later she commented "I'd said all along I didn't want to work in an office but it's a job, and if I get bored, I am getting paid for it."

Catherine. Girls grammar school. 2CSE's and 4 O levels. Enrolled for a 2 year A-level course (Art and English) with some O levels. Occupational aim at the start: beautician. But she had also thought of working at the airport - "There must be lots of jobs but how do you find out about them but nothing they say at school like teaching or office work or nursing it's all too routine there is nobody to tell you about anything except the basic jobs." She had looked for a job and had also thought of staying on at school - "I kept changing my mind and then Mum got angry and said I'd got to make up my mind, so I came to college." She would start thinking about jobs next year. Towards the end of her first term she was saying "I don't know if I will finish it - I might get a job - but I'm not looking really hard now." She had applied for a job in the Civil Service before coming to college and had forgotten all about it "I had gone right off the idea." Then a letter arrived asking if she could start the following week. "Everyone I spoke to said I should take it - even the teachers at school - and my Mum said I might go through all this at college and come out at the end and not be able to get a job. But they said it was up to me really. I thought perhaps I could do it for just one year and then do beauty therapy training. It was only the lecturers at college who thought I should stay - my tutor knew it was not what I wanted, and told me all the jobs I could do with A level. But I thought there was always day release -

I had nothing to lose. College was getting very routine and I had been missing lessons - getting nowhere fast. And it had been in my mind that it might be difficult getting a job later - all the things I want to do are getting hard to get into." Catherine left college in December 1976. Her appointment was as clerical officer (minimum qualifications two O levels) in the Civil Service.

Vivienne. Girls grammar school. Left before taking O levels, had worked for 1 year. Enrolled for 1 year O-level course.

Occupational aim at the start: "no idea".

She had worked at a hairdressers and a supermarket after leaving, but She thought perhaps the college careers officer might help her with jobs "it was useless at school - just why not be a nurse or work in an office, and I could never do that." Towards the end of the first term she was saying she might stay on to do A levels "But all plans seem serious at the time when you think about it and then it disappears a couple of months later sometimes I wonder if I will stick the course." Towards the end of the second term she said "I've been getting cheesed off and not going in - every other day I've thought of chucking it all but that would be silly because there is no point - there is nothing else to do. I had a phase of going in for speech therapy - but ~~that~~ just faded out - it was Mum's idea. I wouldn't be able to cope with all the work - another year at college and then three years at Poly. I just don't know what I want to do - I'm scared of going into something I just can't get out of and be stuck for the rest of my life." Vivienne left college just before Easter to work full time at the hotel where she had been working part time. For six months she did not want to be interviewed, but finally wrote from Wales, where she was working in an hotel and planning to make a career in hotel management "although as a waitress it will take a long time to work my way up." She concluded "I think I became more determined to take my time deciding because I felt as if people from

all sides were pushing me and maybe expecting too much from me. I know I have the ability to do something which requires a little more intelligence."

Anna. Girls grammar school. 9 O levels. 1 year in the VIth form starting an A level course. Enrolled on 2 year A-level course (Maths, Chemistry and Biology).

Occupational aim at start: Take a degree in nursing studies.

She had wanted to come to college after O levels "they just didn't like me at school" but her parents had been doubtful and it was only after "not getting on at all" with her A levels at school that they had agreed. "I must succeed here or not try again." Towards the end of the first term she commented "I would like to get paid for doing the subjects - I would like a job but would get very bored with any job I would get with just O levels." She was worried about the standard of work at college and her chances of getting into university "I've been starting to realise how hard it is to get in." She left just before Easter to work as a lab. technician and explained "I had had no idea how much I would have to study outside classes I just couldn't get down to it - there were too many distractions - friends and hobbies - I wanted to do too many things and when you have got full time study you can't. So I decided what would suit me would be half and half, day release and a job, so I found this one"(at the job centre). She felt that "college was good because I found out about myself - realised I liked my independence I would like to have got my A levels out of the way but it would have been a waste of two years because I wouldn't have worked." She didn't like her present job, it was "boring" and "routine" with very low wages. And in fact she had decided on nursing again because she wanted to emigrate - she would be a fully qualified nurse in three years but still at the bottom in working for H.N.D. "I'm just getting low pay here for training I'm not going to do." She later left her lab.

technician's job to work as a waitress whilst applying for nursing training.

Julie W. Girls grammar school. 4 O levels. Enrolled for 2 year A-level course (French, Spanish and English).

Occupational aim at the start: **Courier.**

"Dad was at the airport and we've got friends from everywhere

I've always been very good at languages and I definitely want to travel if not languages the school thought it was just a passing phase and that I would think of something else." She left college in November of her first year, her Spanish A level class having been cancelled for lack of sufficient students. "And I felt I was just wasting my time. I didn't want to leave but I didn't want two years when I could be earning something." Her tutor had taken her to the careers department but there was not much that she could do.

"Then I was just chatting at the hairdressers and they offered me a job - and they are crying out for hairdressers in Spain if you have got the language." After two weeks she said she didn't really like it - "it was just washing hair" but she wanted to go abroad and "if I stick it out my Dad will set me up in business in Spain when he retires there. My parents think it is fantastic - once I'm a qualified hairdresser I've got it made." She was however looking for other jobs and after one month in hairdressing returned to college to follow an O level course including German and typing. She left again three weeks later to work as dental receptionist "I was enjoying it all and then Catherine left - she had helped me and now I felt awkward going into classes where I didn't know anybody so I didn't go to many lessons after Catherine left. I told my tutor I had no money, my friends were in different classes, that I didn't know what to do, just kept feeling I was wasting my time, and yet once I left I wanted to come back, and that I wanted to work abroad in a couple of years time. Then I was at Catherine's looking through

the papers, there was an advert for dental receptionist trainee and I thought no harm in trying I'm not going to think of the future any more - the trouble with me is that I get an idea in my head and I can't wait. I hope I can do something with this in Spain - once there I would like to be a courier ." She later left this job, as her parents moved to another part of Manchester, and she was working in her father's off-licence/grocery; but had met a Spanish family who were promising to take her to Spain as an au pair the following year.

Susanne. Girls grammar school. 3 O levels. Enrolled for 1 year O-level course to be followed by "premed" course.

Occupational aim at the start: nurse.

"My grandmother was ill last year and I helped nurse her and Mum is keen on me doing nursing because it would have been my grandmother's wish - she and my great grandmother were both nurses. But I can still do catering (her original aim) if I wish." Her father wanted her to go on to A levels "but I used to get left behind at O levels." School hadn't helped "I didn't get on with the careers teacher and anyway she was only for VIth formers." A friend of the family who was a district nurse had told them of the "premed" course at the college. During her first year she considered in turn childrens nursing (she had seen a T.V. programme), catering and then medical secretary because she enjoyed typing so much. She left college in July to work full time at a private nursing home where she had been working part time. "I enjoyed it so much I didn't really want to go back to college, so Mum got me a full time job after the holidays." She planned to stay there till she could start training as a nurse at eighteen - but there were few vacancies, even for S.E.N. "I was saying to Mum that I like it so much at the nursing home I'm not sure that I even want to train."

Julie S. Mixed secondary modern. Transferred to Vith form of girls grammar school for O levels. 7 CSE's and 1 O level. Enrolled for 1 year O level course.

Occupational aim at the start: "No idea"

"At one time it was nursing because everyone was doing it, then Mum said the Civil Service was a good job with good pay - she doesn't want me going into an office like she did but I'd like to do something with people and travelling around. I suppose I should be thinking about what I'm going to do - there are so many jobs I don't know half of them - I hear about something and feel I'd like to do it but I don't know what is involved." Towards the end of her first term she was thinking of something to do with dentistry "But I often think of something, work towards it, and then stop - everyone keeps asking me and I've not really come up with anything." Towards Easter she was thinking of leaving college "the girl I go around with now is a garage receptionist - she would put in a word for me, but Mum says I should get my qualifications." She had been to the dental hospital and the careers officer was finding out about application "but there is a danger I may not have the right qualifications." But she had been put down to return to college for more O levels. She left college, having gained one more O level, without a job. She explained in the September that she had had an interview for a dental assistant but had "gone off it". She had tried for clerical jobs and the Civil Service but all needed five O levels; and had an interview for lab. technician at I.C.I. the following week "but I've got doubts about it - I'm not really sure what is involved - I've not got a great feeling of anything I really want to do."

Christine. Girls secondary modern. 8 CSE's. Enrolled for a one year O-level course.

Occupational aim at the start: pharmacy technician.

She needed O levels for that and would then "go on a course". If she

didn't get her O levels this year she would try next year. Her Mother had said she must have qualifications "the school just told you what you needed if you were going to get a job." Towards the end of her first term she was considering the Boots training course, as well as I.C.I., but later "I think I'll probably do the college course - it starts at eighteen - I don't know any more about it - I've got another year." (In fact the college did not run a pharmacy course) She had been looking through the papers "there were quite a few vacancies but they all want experience and training but I won't settle for anything less." Towards Easter she said she had been having trouble with jobs - "You need to be between sixteen and eighteen with four O levels to be taken on the pharmacy course at Withington Hospital, and I shall be eighteen by the time I get my O levels. And at Boots even people with A levels can't get on to pharmacy training courses. The careers officer suggested dental technician - I just want something in a lab. to do with medicine." At the end of the year she said "I think I ought to get a job due to the job situation. I don't think I will be returning in September - the more qualifications I take, by the time I go for a job the qualifications will have gone up. I'll get a job as dispenser or dental technician or just take a job till something suitable turns up." She had an interview at Boots for trainee dispenser, didn't get the job, but was taken on as general assistant as a new branch was to be opened shortly and might need dispensers.

Beverley. Mixed comprehensive. 7 CSE's and 1 O level. Enrolled for a one year O-level course.

Occupational aim at the start: Beautician or perhaps fashion photography.

Her friends were going to be secretaries or typists "but I couldn't bear to be stuck in an office. I've never really known what I wanted to do but there are lots of jobs for beauticians and you can travel

around." At the end of her first term she was still interested in beauty therapy - she needed four O levels to get in and could go at seventeen for three years or eighteen for two years. She applied during the spring term but was saying that it was difficult to get in "lots of girls want to do it, and I keep thinking that the others might have O levels already." If she did not get in she was thinking of training with Elizabeth Arden in Manchester but she would not get a diploma, and with the Abraham Moss Diploma she could work in shops, T.V., or could travel. "I don't want to stay and do my A levels but I suppose I would if I couldn't get in." She had her interview during the summer term and they had said they would get in touch, but she definitely had to have her four O levels - "I had hoped that they might be more lenient. But I've gone off the idea, when I went there it seemed just like school and it's a three year course and you don't know definitely if you are going to get a job it just didn't appeal very much." So she had sent up for information on becoming a ground hostess at the airport. She gained three more O levels, to give her a total of four, but did not take up her place for beautician training. An uncle who worked for K.L.M. learned of a vacancy for a ground hostess at the airport. "I'd probably not have heard of it without him - there is a long waiting list - but if you know someone in the airport you can get in." They took thirty temporary staff at the beginning of the summer and at the end of the summer decided who they were going to keep. "If I'm not kept on, I don't know I'm just hoping I will be you are given one week's notice I might try tour operators."

Elizabeth. Girls secondary modern. 9 CSE's, 5 at Grade 1, and 3 of these also passed at O level.

Enrolled for a one year O level course but intended to go on to do A levels the following year.

Occupational aim at the start: Banking or accountancy.

"Mum said it was better if I had something behind me." At the end of the first term she was thinking she might go to university. "I've not really thought about jobs banking is still in my mind and accountancy I'll see how my exams go but I want to do A levels next year. Everybody I know has gone to university so I suppose I might as well have a go." Later, she was thinking of a medical kind of profession. "I read in a magazine about microbiology but not training for six years I'll be glad to get my education over and done with, get some qualifications behind me." She was thinking of leaving college during the summer term - "They told me I'd have to stay another three years at college, doing science subjects for a medical job. If I stayed three years I might not like it and then I'd be twenty and left with nothing to do. A friend of the family said, instead of wasting my time at college not knowing what to do, drop college and get a job and I might just suddenly decide on the career. I want then I could go back to college or do evening classes. I've been thinking of banking - I could do A levels at evening class and be earning money during the day, but it's hard getting a banking job, they all said they need no more recruits If I decide on anything now I will change my mind I had been thinking I didn't have to decide on a career till I was eighteen - you have to decide in two or three weeks when it will last the rest of your life." She started work as a clerk in a stockbroker's office in July, and said shortly afterwards "In college I didn't really know what I wanted to do so I thought it best if I left - I wrote off for several jobs and this is really the only one that came up." She had nine O levels, minimum requirement was five, and the firm seemed very unsure of promotion prospects. "If people ask me what it's like I say, well, yes, it's alright, but I still don't really know what I want to do. I don't want to stay there ten years and still be in the same position... So I've just got a job in an office - I really had expected something

careerwise, but I might eventually do something - I'm not stuck for the rest of my life."

Karen. Girls secondary modern. 6 CSE's, 3 at Grade 1 and 1, 0 level. Enrolled for a 2 year A-level course (English, History and Government and Politics).

Occupational aim at the start: She did not know what she wanted to do - but perhaps English Literature at university. "No-one has ever suggested a job to me - they didn't bother much at school about what you were going to do they just got rid of you as fast as they could and they expected me to go into a dead end job The careers teacher wanted us all to go into catering - the year before, it was nursing." Her parents were pleased at her coming to college "but they are the sort who will be pleased whatever you do as long as you are not wasting time." Towards the end of the first term she still had no idea what to do "It still seems a long way away I've thought about university but I don't think I'm bright enough I'll think about it at the end of the first year - thousands of things could happen by then." During the spring term she decided not to apply "I couldn't face another three years I'd like to work in a hospital or something with people a nurse or social worker." but later changed her mind "I'm going to need decent A-level grades to get a good job, same as for university, so I might as well study for more years as go in for a job I would get fed up with."

By the beginning of her second year she had applied to UCCA but no jobs after university really appealed to her. She was rejected by all five universities she applied to through the clearing house so applied to some polytechnics. "If I don't make Poly. or fail my A-levels I'll start all over again with science subjects." She did fail her A-levels and enrolled at Stockport College of Technology to resit them and take biology O level. She wrote in November "I have decided I want to go into nursing - I've dropped the idea of Poly. because it was only putting off the day of deciding what I

want to work at. Nursing balances the practical and academic work, and I feel that if I want to make a career on the admin. side of the medical profession I could do so. The opportunities for nursing are not easy to come by - I can satisfy the entry requirements but everywhere is heavily subscribed - I've got two interviews - Lancaster and Salford, in February."

Liese. Mixed comprehensive. 3 O levels and 2 CSE's (Grade 1) & other CSE's. Enrolled for a 2 year A-level course (English, Sociology and British Constitution).

Occupational aim at the start: Journalist.

"From the beginning of secondary school I've always enjoyed English and was trying to think of something related to it I thought of authoress but I'd still have to do a full time job Dad works at the Express and I went to see them it's four years training and I'll apply to a college of journalism the middle of next year another thing is politics abroad or something like that but not sitting in an office I want to get out and meet people Mum said stay on and get as much education as you can, though they would never force me." She was, however, having doubts about journalism by the end of her first term "I wouldn't be able to stick it out. There is a lot of hard work and it is very competitive - I don't want to keep waiting and waiting." She had become interested in sociology "but the jobs don't appeal - I don't want something ordinary that would tie me down." After Christmas of her first year she was thinking of a year off after A levels to travel, then sociology at university and work in the social services in somewhere like India or Pakistan. And at Easter "I don't really know what I want to do - I might leave - I could do with some money and I'm really bored - I seem to have been studying for ages - I just can't be bothered doing anything at the moment but I couldn't do a dead end job." Then she applied to the Navy "I had been trying to think

of ways I could get a decent job without going to university I'm bored here now, what would it be like at university? - I wanted to go into the Navy years ago and was looking at some old brochures." Her aim had been to go in on a commission, needing two A levels, but when she found she could not do social work training in the Navy, she gave up the idea, and in October '77 applied to university to do social administration and was accepted at Lancaster on two C's. (She did, however, during her second year apply to the army in case she failed her A levels). Liese left college then still waiting to hear from the W.R.A.C. and waiting for her A level results. She tried to get a job for the summer, had a lot of difficulty, but eventually, (four weeks before the final interview with her) got a job as Sales Promoter in an insulation company. And having learnt she had failed her A levels completely, she was now considering staying in this job - she enjoyed the (mainly evening) work, she was on commission and she reckoned there were very good chances of promotion.

June. Girls secondary modern. 6 CSE's, 1 at Grade 1 and 4 O levels (after one year in the VIth form). Enrolled for 2 year A level course (Sociology, Biology and English).

Occupational aim at the start: Primary school teaching - but had also thought recently of nursery nursing. "I always wanted to be a nurse until I started watching T.V. programmes on nursing and I changed my mind I always seem to be changing my mind I only wanted to be a nurse because that was what all my friends were doing. At school you were left to make your own decisions I really had no idea." Before Christmas of the first year she was thinking seriously of university or polytechnic "a lecturer has been telling us all to go and my boyfriend is at university. In the back of my mind I'd always thought I'd like to go there but never really thought I could. But now I've actually got to the point of doing A levels but I've no idea what I'd do there." After Christmas she went to the careers

office "but there are so many possibilities at the moment, sometime next year I have to make up my mind but I don't want it to be a final decision - I want to be able to change my mind when I feel like it"; and at Easter "I'm still thinking of university but I've no idea what to do - primary school teaching is still at the back of my mind there must be thousands of jobs but I've honestly not looked at anything." During the summer of her first year she went to see the careers officer several times "I had some ideas - I thought perhaps I'd like to do something with speech therapy or occupational therapy but I would need maths and a science at O level. ; she gave me a careers book to look through and told me to make a list of the careers that interested me. Eventually I came up with a couple of ideas that I could do with the qualifications I have but none interest me any more and I'm back with what I started with - I really do want to go to university now." Her tutor and the careers officer were saying she had to make up her mind "I might think of applying for a poly. - that will shut them up - at least I will have applied for something." And then at the start of the second year she applied for nursing training "Everybody was going on at me to do something about jobs so I thought I had better do something or I will end up with nowhere to go." She was accepted for training in eighteen months time, depending on A level results. "I feel settled now I've made the effort - I can forget about it." She passed her A levels with two D's "So now I want to do as much as possible with them." She applied to Manchester Polytechnic and was accepted for a B.A. in Social Studies.

Gillian. Girls grammar school. 5 O levels. Enrolled for 2 year A-level course (Biology, English and Art).

Occupational aim at the start: Physiotherapist.

"I've wanted to do that ever since my mother had an accident when I was ten and I saw the physiotherapists at work." Nothing else really appealed to her - school had not been very useful in giving ideas; she

had thought of nursery nursing or chiropody but they were too "run of the mill". Her parents didn't mind as long as she carried on with her education and didn't get a job. "Mum is frightened of me getting used to the money working in a shop." At the end of her first term she was still thinking of physiotherapy "but I'm less committed now than before - before I accepted it more than thought of it and now it's coming nearer I'm thinking of it more; I've been on a visit to a hospital - you have an image - when you see it, it gives you cause to think - there were lots of old people - I would want to specialise in children." She later (January) became worried, she knew somebody who had been refused with C grade O levels and had been to see the careers officer and written to the school of physiotherapy asking if she should retake her O levels. In April she said "I've gone off physiotherapy a bit, I've looked around to see if there is anything else but not come up with it - I want something fairly specialized - when I went to the hospital it all seemed very general, doing exercises, but perhaps in the wards it would be different - intensive care appeals to me, where you are actually doing something." But she was definitely going to apply - "I don't know what would happen if I didn't get in - but I'd adapt to something else." She applied to the college of physiotherapy in the summer but also started looking at alternatives. She was accepted at Salford Technical College to train in Chiropody (condition of two A levels) "But I was a bit put off - there were a lot of old people - it didn't really appeal" and was accepted at a few hospitals for S.R.N. training, but some as late as 1980. She had also, during her second year, seen a small paragraph on sick childrens nursing at the careers office and got every address she could find locally and applied to all of them. She was offered a place for the following April at Booth Hall Childrens Hospital to train for S.R.N. and sick childrens nurse combined (It was a definite offer - she already had the minimum requirements of five O levels). Meanwhile her physiotherapy application "had got sent on everywhere." She had a feeling she had

applied too late in comparison to most people, finally had an offer from Birmingham, but did not want to go.

Janet. Mixed secondary modern. 8 CSE's, 5 at Grade 1 and 3 of these also passed at O level. Enrolled for 2 year A level course (Biology, Art and Domestic Science).

Occupational aim at the start: Domestic Science teacher.

"I liked domestic science and art at school and people said there were no prospects for art so I decided on domestic science I like the way teachers work I want to teach what I know." She was worried about getting no job at the end but hoped that in five years prospects would be better. "Dad went to the library to find out about college he had wanted me to transfer to the grammar school the headmaster was only interested if you were getting a job - he didn't even ask about my courses you were O.K. if you were going to college."

During the summer of her first year she was worried because she might have to have a science A level and was investigating the local college to find out her position. She had also sent up for information on the Home Economics course at Salford Technical College in case she could not get into college. "There seem to be lots of openings so I'll wait to hear from the colleges." She applied through the clearing house in the September of her second year and was accepted at her first choice - Manchester College of Higher Education - on two E's. She had been looking around at other jobs in the papers towards the end of her second year because she wasn't sure she would get her A levels and had actually applied for a lab. technician trainee at Withington Hospital studying for City and Guilds (but application was too late). "There were clerks, lab. assistants, shop assistants - I was trying to gauge what qualifications were needed for what jobs - most of them were office jobs and sometimes I thought I had taken the wrong subjects, there were so many secretarial and sometimes I wondered what I had stayed at college for - I'm not qualified for anything If I don't get into college I'll go to the job centre and just see what turns

up." She passed her A levels with a D and E so was going to the City of Manchester College of Higher Education to read for B.Sc. Ord. Degree in Home Economics. At the end of three years, she could either go into industry (e.g. food analysis) or do an extra year for B.Ed.

Irenia. Girls grammar school. 4 CSE's. Enrolled for 1 year O-level course, to be followed by pre-P.E. course, with A levels.

Occupational aim at the start: Teach P.E.

"Sport is the only thing I'm good at, I'm so athletic I need ten hours a week of sport - the only way to get that is through my job." She had not liked school, had not worked and "the school didn't want me to stay on, I was too much of a drop out and they couldn't care less about me coming here." She had applied for the pre-P.E. course and had been very disappointed at being rejected because she had not enough qualifications. "Mum is a bit dubious about me coming here - she thinks I'll work for a couple of weeks and then go back to my old self." She continued to insist throughout the research that if she didn't get her qualifications and get into college she would just keep on trying "I don't care how long it takes me I just don't know what I'll do if I don't get in It's my life, P.E. - it's the only thing I know about." She had planned on three years at college to get her O and A level entry requirements and at the end of her first year she had passed two out of five O levels, leaving two A levels and four O levels for the next two years. She mentioned very briefly the alternatives of the army, work in a leisure centre, or beautician "But it would be a waste - I know I'd make a good teacher." She also was worried for a while about whether her qualifications would be sufficient, and about employment prospects for teachers. But she attributed her determination to her rejection when she first applied for the P.E. course - "not getting on to the course was the best for me - I would have taken it for granted otherwise and not worked." She obtained her O and A levels and was accepted at

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32. Becker, H. and Geer, B. (1957) op. cit.

and Deutcher, J. (1966) "Words and Deeds", Social Problems, Winter, pp 235-254.

33. Thomas, W.I. (1928) op. cit.

34. Schatzman, L. and Strauss, A.L. (1973) op. cit. p.6.

35. Goffman, E. (1961) Encounters, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Co. pp 150-151.

36. Ibid.

37. Scott, M.B. and Lyman, S.M. (1970) op. cit.

38. See, e.g. discussion of methodology in Strauss, A. et al (1964) Psychiatric Ideologies and Institutions, Especially Chapter 2.

39. Becker, H. (1967) "Whose side are we on?" Social Problems, no.14, pp 239-47.

Chapter 6

1. See Willis,P. (1977) op. cit. and McRobbie,A. (1978) op. cit.
2. Willis,P. (1976) "The class significance of school counter-culture" in Hammersley,M. and Woods,P. (1976) The Process of Schooling, London and Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.198.
3. Willis,P. (1976) ibid.
4. Willis,P. (1976) ibid.
5. McRobbie,A. (1978) op. cit. p.104.

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